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NEW STATESMAN

Why Callaghan must go

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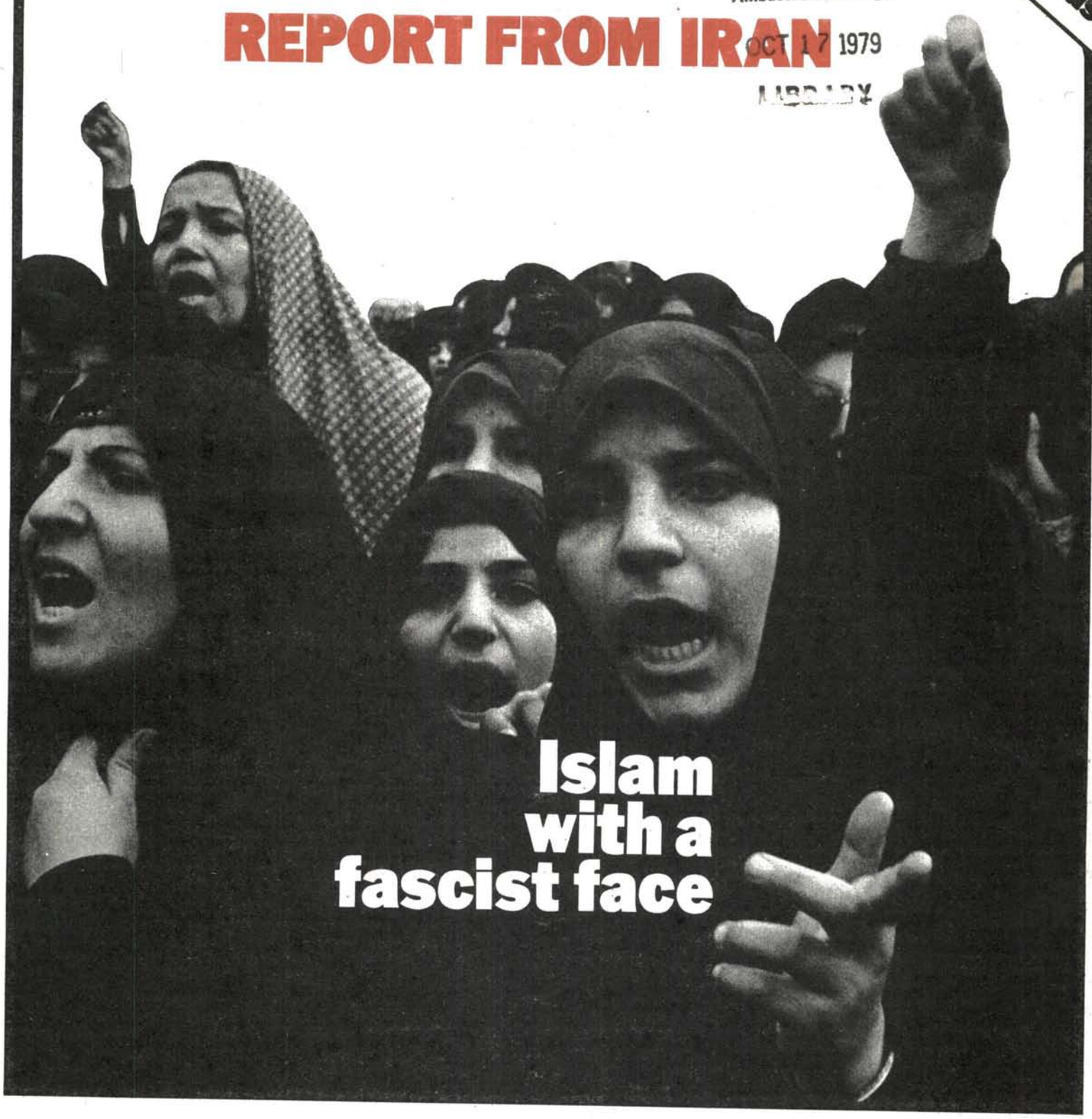

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Callaghan must go

THERE IS AN UNSPOKEN ELEMENT in both the debates which are currently preoccupying the Labour movement. In the first, which concerns itself with future perspectives and past lesssons, it is considered unfair to mention the name of James Callaghan. In the second, which is chiefly about how Labour should decide its policy and pick its leadership, it seems to be assumed that Callaghan should stay in place until he has exerted all possible influence on the choice of his successor. Both these tacit agreements are wrong.

Callaghan has turned out to be an even worse leader of the opposition than he was a Prime Minister. As the Tories press on with their strategy of denuding the social and industrial landscape, the electors could be forgiven for not noticing any coherent or energetic Labour response. Callaghan's few set-piece speeches, and those of many of his lieutenants, show the same combination of emollience and drift which marked their period in office. Partly this is because the policy options of the last government very often held the door open for the Conservatives, and now leave Labour front-benchers open to charges of 'you too'. But equally it is because Callaghan perceives the real enemy as being the National Executive (and much of the membership) of his own party.

There are some signs that Callaghan and his supporters will succeed in relegating the whole discussion of inner-party democracy to another time and another place. This would be dishonest and stupid – even from the viewpoint of the Right. The issue has been postponed far too often. The time for debate is now, and the place is here. And one thing more. The debate would be conducted far better if Mr Callaghan were speaking from the floor rather than the platform. His departure from the leadership would not be a sufficient condition for a real solution, but it has become a necessary one.

Discussion about the mode of party democracy would then acquire some point and some urgency – whereas at present it shows signs of becoming torpid. Alternative strategies for the re-conquest of power could also be debated more fiercely, whereas at present the 'thinkers' in the party show every sign of being mesmerised by the Conservative onslaught. A really purgative bout of self-criticism, and a really honest effort to rebuild, are made impossible while those with most to lose from them remain in charge of the controls.

Callaghan's resignation should be on the LBJ model rather than on the Macmillan one. That is to say, it should not be timed to cause maximum confusion and discomfort to those who want an orderly and democratic succession (Macmillan resigned on the eve of the Tory conference) but rather to make such a transition easier. He should announce, at Blackpool next month or sooner, that he will relinquish the leadership as soon as a suitable method of choosing a leader can be found.

Callaghan's record as a Labour politician leaves him much to apologise for. If he would like to perform one last service to the movement, he could do no better than to cut the Gordian knot and resign with all speed.

Who'd be a juror?

ANYONE WHO HAS been summoned for jury service at the Old Bailey next month may be well advised to refuse to serve and to insist that his or her name and address be struck from the summoning officer's list. Following a secret pre-trial hearing last week, Judge Brian Gibbens gave permission for between 80 and 100 individuals whose names are on the panel for the forthcoming 'Persons Unknown' trial to be vetted by the prosecution and by the defence. This amounts to a gross invasion of their privacy and would, had the news not been leaked to the press, have been carried out without their knowing anything about it.

The trial of Iris Mills, Ronan Bennett and four others who have been charged with 'conspiracy to cause explosions', was thought by the prosecution to be of sufficient 'public importance' to apply for permission to vet potential jurors. This they did under the notorious guidelines which were secretly authorised by Attorney General Sam Silkin in 1974 and only revealed to the public last year. Overruling objections from the defence, Judge Gibbens gave his permission. It was then that the defence applied for legal aid to pay for 'enquiry agents' (private detectives) so that they, too, could check the jury panel. It was an unprecedented step but – as the judge evidently recognised – an entirely logical one. Consent was obtained and now, presumably, the enquiry agents and the police have begun their investigations at taxpayers' expense.

One cannot blame the defence for seeking to put themselves on something like an equal footing with the prosecution. It is their job, after all, to ensure that the accused get a fair trial. What is truly outrageous is that in *any* trial (where the defendant is, of course, always innocent until proved guilty) those who are interested in securing a conviction should be able to weed out from the jury anyone they consider likely to return a verdict of 'not guilty'. Granting similar licence to the defence does not, however, remove that outrage.

The prosecution's vetting methods will no doubt include inspection of police and special branch files and other official records, and calling in local CID officers to make inquiries (whose findings will probably be filed for future reference). The methods of private enquiry agents are bound to be different, as they do not have automatic access to official sources. They may question neighbours, colleagues at work, local shop keepers – anyone who might give them some insight into interests and opinions of the potential juror.

Now that this precedent has been set, we could swiftly move towards the American system, where both sides can put extensive questions to jurors and challenge an unlimited number. The selection procedure there has become almost scientific, the price has been the privacy of countless individual citizens, and there is no evidence that the quality of justice has improved as a result.

In his previous term as Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham reinforced the principle of random selection of juries by ordering in 1973 that jurors' occupations be removed from the jury list. What can we expect from him now? There must be an early public debate on the subject and, as soon as possible, an end to *all* jury vetting, by prosecution and defence.

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NOTES

Petrol price to fall?

Christopher Hird writes: There is a strong possibility that the price of petrol will fall. A combination of falling demand, falling prices on the 'spot' market and high profit margins means there is now scope for price-cutting on petrol station forecourts.

Since the end of price control and the imposition of price increases by the oil producing countries, Britain's petrol station owners have been making higher profits than most of them can ever remember making before. A year ago petrol stations were selling 4-star for about 4p more than it cost them to buy from the oil companies – barely enough to cover their costs. Now they are getting a mark-up of around 14p, leaving them with a profit of about 10p per gallon. If only a few garages in each area take the view that they can manage on a smaller margin, they could set off a stream of price-cutting among their competitors. There are several things which may encourage them to do this.

First, petrol consumption is falling. The last published figures show that demand up to the end of May rose by about 4 per cent, but industry sources suggest that during June and July demand fell by about 2 per cent. As supplies had fallen by more, this made little difference. But now supplies are increasing and some big oil companies have stopped rationing supplies to garages. In some parts of the country – such as the Scottish Highlands and the West Country – there are reports of a marked drop in demand partly caused, it is believed, by holiday-makers staying away for fear of finding no petrol.

Secondly, the price of gasoline has fallen on the spot market – where surplus oil is sold and to which consumers turn to satisfy shortages. Although the spot market is small, because it operates at the margin it can have a big impact on prices generally.

Earlier this year the spot price rose sharply but, after the OPEC price increases and the re-establishment of more normal supplies, it then started falling. Within the last few months the spot price of gasoline has fallen by about 10 per cent. This means that it is now possible to buy on the spot market and sell profitably in British petrol stations. Small independent petrol companies who do not have contractual commitments to the oil producers make their money out of doing this and are back in business. In the past their policy of selling unfamiliarly named petrol cheaply has helped provoke a general wave of price cutting.

No wonder Shell – unveiling a £144 million profit improvement this week – promised no more price increases this year.

M. Foot and 'queers'

Francis Wheen writes: Homosexuals can't keep their hands to themselves. Or so Michael Foot seems to think. There is a gay civil servant in the Department of Employment who has not been called to a promotion interview for 13 years. 'After being transferred to another office within the Department,' he says, 'I was asked to move on again but without explanation. I was told by one of the staff that the supervisor disliked "queers".' When the man's MP, Leo Abse, complained some years ago to the Secretary of State for Employment, Michael Foot (who then occupied that exalted post) replied that this homosexual was 'an unsuitable person to be in an office where the public might have access'. Since there had been no complaint about the man's work or his relations with the public (which is more than can be said for Foot), it can only be assumed that Foot was accepting the old civil service idea that homosexuals are heterosexuals 'with a personality defect'.

This latest example of the true nature of the grand old man of British socialism comes in a new booklet *Queers Need Not Apply* (published by the Campaign for Homosexual Equality) which is packed with cases of discrimination against homosexuals by employers, public services, the press, the police. Will the message be heeded? The trouble with getting socialists to take up the issue of gay rights is that there's always been a strong puritanical streak on the Left, ready to condemn habits as diverse as homosexuality and wine-drinking. 'Decadent and bourgeois' is the usual argument; and, judging by Michael Foot's behaviour, the Labour Party is as happy a home for queer-bashers today as it's ever been.

Death in Southall

Peter Alexander writes: On 1 August Swarn Singh Grewal went out drinking in Southall. At about 10.20 he was arrested for being 'drunk and incapable', and was taken to Southall police station. At 1.10 am the police surgeon announced that he was dead. According to the police he choked on his own vomit.

Nine days later the police allowed his wife and family doctor, Dr Mangat, to see the body for the first time. Mangat noted bruises on the elbow and shins, and an exceptionally severe bruise on the head. He concluded that Mr Grewal must have been assaulted and that this may have caused the vomiting. Dr Mangat and Mrs Grewal both state that Mr Grewal never vomited after drinking. Dr Mangat wants to know why the police did not take Mr Grewal to hospital if he had been assaulted *prior* to the arrest. The inquest has been adjourned until early next month to allow time for 'specimens' taken from the body to be analysed.

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POLICE
Rob Rohrer

Evidence of violence mounts as post mortem points the finger at Huyton police

Was Kelly's death part of a pattern?

THERE IS NOW conclusive evidence that Jimmy Kelly, the 53-year-old labourer who died in the custody of Huyton police, lost his life as a result of heart failure brought on by serious injuries, shock and drunkenness. As reported in the NEW STATESMAN (20 July), witnesses had seen Kelly brutally kicked and punched by two police officers shortly before his death; however, the first post mortem, by a Home Office pathologist, claimed to find no serious injuries and a second, independent one, ordered by Kelly's relatives, was abruptly terminated when the Coroner impounded the body. A third post mortem, carried out by Alan Usher, head of Sheffield University's Forensic Pathology Department, produced these latest findings, which are contained in a confidential report shortly to go to Merseyside's Chief Constable. Usher confirms that Kelly's jaw was fractured in two places, that a vertebra was crushed and that 36 bruises covered the upper half of his body.

The findings coincide with NEW STATESMAN investigations which reveal that Jimmy Kelly's death was not an isolated incident, but marked the violent end of a bloody and eventful week at Huyton police station. In the five nights preceding Kelly's death, a succession of prisoners were released from the Huyton cells nursing bruises, cuts, swellings and broken bones. Two prisoners were so badly hurt that they were taken in custody to Whiston hospital, several miles away, for treatment.

The allegations – many of them supported by medical evidence and eye witnesses – make up a fearful catalogue of brutality. One prisoner left the cells with a fractured thumb. Another had a damaged kidney. Two prisoners say their noses were broken. Another – a 54-year-old-man – says he was beaten about the face with a wet, knotted towel. An 18-year-old youth arrested the following night says he too was lashed with a knotted towel while tied face down on a cell bench. The same youth says he was touched three times on the calf with a burning cigarette. Another prisoner claims hot ash was flicked on to an open scalp wound and a cigarette placed against his head and chest. All complain they were repeatedly kicked and punched by groups of CID and uniformed officers.

These allegations come from more than 25 people who were held in police custody, or who witnessed arrests. Many have been charged with offences ranging from being drunk and disorderly to assaulting police officers. The substance of these charges will be dealt with by the courts, but in some cases the outcome will not be known until well into next year.

THE NIGHT of Friday 15 June was a typical one at the Huyton Park Hotel. The towels were up and the last groups of regulars were showing their usual lethargy about leaving. Suddenly, however, around 11.15 pm, the pub filled with police, who announced that people would be charged with drinking after hours. Within half an hour, an estimated 18 customers were under arrest. First into the van was John Murray, 22, a Ford car worker: 'I'd felt a punch at the back of my neck and someone said "put the handcuffs on that bastard".' Lying on the floor of the police van, Murray found the pain of the handcuffs difficult to bear: 'They seemed to be digging right into my skin.' Five days later the body of Jimmy Kelly carried deep weals around both wrists and an expert view is that a ratchet type of handcuff had been used – one which gives a tight and painful fit if required. They are not standard issue on Merseyside.

Huyton police station where the assaults were alleged to have taken place

With a full load of pub customers, the van arrived at Huyton station and most of the occupants were led in. Then the trouble began. John Bishop, a 23-year-old labourer, says he was set upon by a group of uniformed and CID men: 'They just said "Him!" as I got out of the van. One punched me in the belly and I went down. I curled up into a ball. There were six of them booting hell out of me.'

Phil Thompson, 21, another Ford worker, saw what happened: 'He was down on the floor in a second and they were just kicking him. It's a wonder John wasn't another Jimmy Kelly the way they laid into him.' Thompson had little time to watch. As he left the van, he says, it was his turn. Two uniformed officers grabbed his arms while a third landed several fierce punches to his nose and mouth. The attack cost him, he says, a broken nose, one front tooth knocked out by the root and two others chipped. Both attacks were seen by the handcuffed John Murray.

Bishop recalls regaining consciousness in the cell showers. 'I vaguely remember getting another smack but I couldn't really feel anything by then.' His injuries included a large cut on the head, a black eye, a swollen jaw (later x-rayed at Whiston hospital) and extensive bruising.

THE SHOWER had other visitors that night. Ned Rogers, a 54-year-old hod carrier, says: 'I thought I was being taken down to be charged. Half way down the detective stopped and says "here you are, go take a shower". I said "no". The next thing, I got hit in the stomach by a uniformed copper. I went down and three of them started kicking me. I got it in the head first.' Then Rogers was taken back to his cell and told to wash in the sink. He refused. 'I was bleeding but I wasn't having a wash. I saw them taking the roller towel down and knotting it at one end. They soaked it in water and the detective who'd arrested me comes straight in swinging the towel and hitting my head from side to side. He was a big fellow. He did it for about a minute or two until he saw the blood coming from my ear.'

The attack on Rogers was witnessed by two other prisoners – Bobby Aspinall, a 21-year-old coal miner, and John Roche, 18, an unemployed commis chef. 'I tried to stop them but I was in too much pain myself and I could only lie there,' says Aspinall. He too had been taken, he claims, into the passage way near the shower and punched in the face and then kicked near the base of the spine.

Phil Thompson was another reluctant visitor to the shower. There he was questioned about an unmarked police car that had had its back window broken outside the Huyton Park pub two weeks earlier. The same questions were put to Aspinall who was told as he was being kicked: 'You won't do the car again.' The broken car window at last seemed to be offering some explanation for the police interest in the Huyton Park customers. When Thompson replied he knew nothing, he says they started punching him. 'The same fellow that got me was running up and down the passageway with the towel. He was like a madman.'

ALL BUT ONE of the Huyton Park customers were charged and released around dawn. Most of the charges were for being drunk and disorderly. John Bishop, however, was not allowed out and he stayed to become a witness himself to further evidence of the pattern of violence within the Huyton police cells.

Late on the Saturday night Bishop says he heard screams and shouts coming from

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another cell. As he looked out of the cell hatch a passing CID man told him: 'He thinks he's tough, that's what he gets for beating up police officers.' 'There was a young kid with his mouth cut who could hardly walk,' says Bishop. This was probably Peter Jeonney, 18, arrested at the Eagle and Child pub earlier. Police converged on the pub when it became known that two officers had been attacked and left lying on the ground outside. Richard Crockett, a 17-year-old apprentice bricklayer, claims he saw the police officer go up to Jeonney and punch him. Jeonnney fell to the ground and several witnesses say they clearly saw him being kicked by a group of officers. Then he was pulled up and, he says: 'A uniformed officer hit me right in the nose. It lifted me back on to my feet.' His father saw the police van later with his son inside. 'I saw one fellow punching Peter around the face,' says James Jeonney. 'One raised a baton and hit Peter with it. It was a helluva blow. I heard Peter scream.'

In the cells at Huyton Peter Jeonney says he was visited by two CID officers and two uniformed men who tied his arms and legs to the cell bench with his shoelaces. 'I was face down. They hit me with a knotted towel and were laughing. The one with the towel was in uniform and had blue sunglasses on. He was ugly. Then they took my pants down and burned me about three times on the leg with a cigarette. I was screaming.' Jeonney was taken by the police to Whiston hospital where his arm was put into a sling and his facial and nasal bones x-rayed. A lawyer who saw Jeonney two days later said: 'It's the worst beating I've ever seen.'

Geoffrey Jones, 21, was arrested at his home at 5 am on Sunday. He too alleges that he was punched, kicked, and beaten with a truncheon as they took him downstairs and into the van, watched by his father and sister: 'I was using my arms to protect my head,' he says. The baton blows fractured his thumb. In a small room at the station he says a CID man seized his hair and ears and thrust his head back and forth against the wall behind his chair. 'I was bleeding badly. When I was back in the cell I heard screaming. It was Peter Jeonney. He was screaming something like "leave me alone".' Then, claims Jones, a hefty CID officer came into the cell and ordered him to lie on the floor. 'He started booting me in the ribs and face. He was kicking as hard as he could. That's when the blood started coming from my head.'

Jimmy Kelly (arrowed) at a family wedding shortly before his death

THE EVENTS of this weekend in June at Huyton police station may throw more light on the death of Jimmy Kelly on 21 June. Kelly was an occasional drinker at the Eagle and Child pub. He was also a third cousin of Geoffrey Jones. And there is clear evidence that tempers were running high at the Huyton police station. The third post mortem concludes the investigation into his death and all that remains is for the Director of Public Prosecutions to dispel the lingering suspicions of any cover-up by bringing proceedings. The same weight of evidence would have had civilians charged with murder within 24 hours.

But the controversy surrounding the Huyton force now stretches far wider than the death of Jimmy Kelly. Are all these people who have spoken at length to the NEW STATESMAN in collusion to discredit their local police station? Or is there at Huyton a state of lawlessness among certain groups of policemen? No internal inquiry is ever going to get to the heart of the matter. The Huyton station is already besieged with superintendents from other Merseyside divisions conducting inquiries into suspected criminal offences by officers – including theft of fines, assaults, and other serious offences.

There is an overwhelming case for an immediate inquiry under the 1964 Police Act into the running of a major Merseyside police station and the nature of control exercised by the Chief Constable. It could start by examining the casualty records of Whiston hospital for the five days ending 20 June.

PRICES

Fiddling the figures

CONFIDENTIAL

To the Minister

You asked me last week to advise you on the various fiddles that the new Tax and Price Index (TPI) opened up for the Government. You will understand that we in your private office, as civil servants, could not possibly assist in any 'fiddles'; however, here is some objective information for you to consider. It would still be politically embarrassing for this memorandum to be made public, so I advise some caution in the use you make of it.

First, it would be unwise to repeat the words of the Prime Minister, when she told the House of Commons on 12 July:

> Alongside the present retail price index we are planning to introduce a standard of living index, which will give much more accurate reflection of the direct tax reductions which have been made. After all, the tax that one pays is the price for education, roads, defence and so on. When that price goes down, the reduction should be reflected in the retail price index. Unfortunately, it is not.

The TPI is *not* a standard of living index: it partially measures a combination of price and tax changes, so that when it rises it means that prices or taxes are going up, not that people are getting better off. Moreover, while the TPI indirectly measures the 'price' of education, roads and so on, it does not count the quantity or quality of what that money buys. You could halve the 'price' of schools – perhaps – by halving the amount of teaching. But it would be perverse to maintain that the standard of living was thereby enhanced.

Secondly, try and steer clear of a detailed statistical defence of the TPI. Unlike the retail prices index (RPI), to which considerable effort is devoted by statisticians at the Department of Employment, the TPI is frankly a hurried second-rate job that nobody at the Inland Revenue or Central Statistical Office takes any great pride in. They don't mind the *idea* of the TPI; but they resent being rushed into a spatchcock job that uses available, not always appropriate figures. If you want the truth (incidentally, do you?) I know someone at the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies who could turn your hair white. Briefly, he says: the TPI uses Inland Revenue data that includes the self-employed and people living off unearned income – when more recent Family Expenditure Survey figures covering paid employment would be better; the TPI moves from gross to net pay when it should do the opposite; the TPI ignores child benefits, even though these form a significant part of many family incomes; and if you had the time I could explain the illogical way the TPI treats mortgage tax relief and a thing called the annual accruals basis.

Thirdly, keep *very* quiet about the impact of the TPI on the higher-paid. Near the bottom of your red box last weekend was the text of a forthcoming article in *Economic Trends*; you may have missed it, as did – fortunately – the journalists of the dailies to whom it was also issued. This shows how the TPI has changed over the last 12 months for different income groups:

Income in July 1978 £	Increase in gross income up to July 1979 in order to maintain net spending power (%)
2,000	14.9
3,000	14.0
4,000	13.1
5,000	12.5
6,000	12.1
8,000	11.8
TPI	13.2

In other words, the less a family earns, the faster its pay must rise to keep pace with inflation and the Government's tax changes. What *Economic Trends* doesn't do is the sums for top earners. According to the office's tame statistician they would be:

10,000	10.9
15,000	5.5
20,000	−2.3
30,000	−18.1

What that means is that, following the budget income tax cuts, company directors could actually afford a pay cut and still be better off than this time last year, despite 15.6 per cent inflation. If any of your friends at the golf club notice this and start to worry, you could reassure them with the words of Nigel Lawson, Financial Secretary to the Treasury:

> There is no case for using any index, whether the RPI or the TPI, as a basis for wage bargaining.

Finally, on a more positive note, it will be possible next spring to portray a wholly spurious cut in inflation. Because the TPI has not included this year's tax cuts until July, the April to June figures are artificially high. That means that the year-on-year increase to be announced next April, after next year's budget, will be artificially low – probably around 9 per cent – even though the RPI will still be up 17 per cent over 12 months. If the press continues to give us an easy ride, Fleet Street might well be taken in. My guess is that trade union negotiators won't be.

Peter Kellner

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The revolution turns to repression

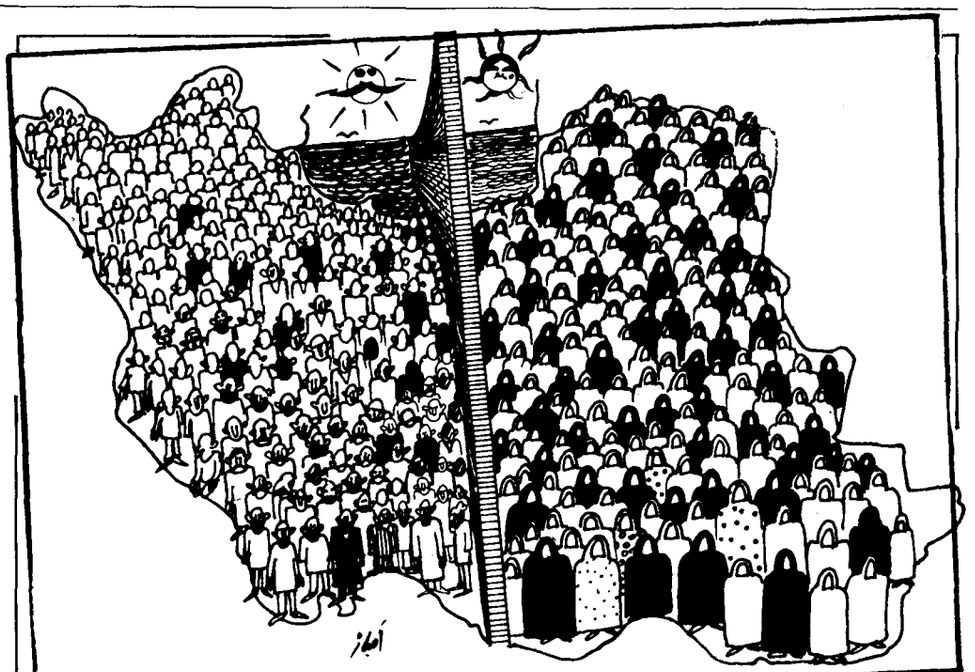
Rising unemployment and inflation, growing repression and a disorganised opposition characterise today's Iran. FRED HALLIDAY reports from the country which the Islamic leaders, unable to rule, are dragging to a bloodbath.

IT DOES NOT take one long to sense the ferocious right-wing Islamic fervour that grips much of Iran today. In the airport arrival hall, in front of the (unattended) health controls, hangs a poster on which the dove of peace is being ripped open by a hammer and sickle. Underneath runs the simple message: 'The Mirage'. Along the walls on the way into Tehran the slogans 'Death to Communism' and 'Death to the Fedayin' can be seen, and amid the plethora of renamed streets none is called after any left-winger who gave his or her life in the 25 year struggle against the Shah. Huge placards show an Iranian revolutionary breaking through shackles imposed by both the Russian and US flags, and the walls of the massive Soviet embassy compound in the centre of the city are daubed with hostile slogans.

The second night I was in Iran I attended the first major public rally held by the Tudeh, or Communist Party, in the 30 years since it was banned by the Shah. A crowd of around 50,000 people had gathered to hear Ehsan Tabari, the party's leading theoretician and the grandson of an Ayatollah, who was now a candidate in the coming elections for a Council of Experts to discuss the constitution. Most of the crowd appeared to be students, but there was more than a sprinkling of older people, gnarled representatives of another age. As several hundred stewards with linked arms guarded the perimeter of the meeting, groups of right-wing youths, named 'Phalangists' by their opponents, roamed around shouting 'Death to the Tudeh and the Fedayis, Social Parasites' and repeating the most frequent rightist slogan heard in Iran: 'There is no Party but the Party of God, No Leader but the Spirit of God', the latter being a reference to Khomeini. Thwarted in their main aim of disrupting the meeting, these Islamic militants turned on a hapless Iranian press photographer, and, after chasing him across the campus grounds smashed his equipment and pummelled him to the ground amid chants of 'Allah is Great'.

This hysteria is not confined to Muslim activists on the street, but can be found at the centre of the Islamic government from which it receives strong encouragement. Three of Khomeini's top advisers whom I interviewed – Foreign Minister Yazdi, Radio and TV Director Ghotbzadeh, and Economics Adviser Bani-Sadr – all blamed the left for Iran's present troubles and claimed that the left had played no role in the revolution that overthrew the Shah. A similar view is held by Ayatollah Nuri, one of the key organisers of last year's anti-Shah demonstrations in Tehran.

For weeks, offices and bookshops belonging to left-wing organisations in the provinces have been attacked. On Friday 10 August, for example, crowds coming out of the mosque in the Azerbaijani town of Urumieh burnt down the Fedayin bookstore, and this was followed by attacks on left-wing offices and bookstalls in Tehran on the following Monday. The new press law, which makes criticism of the Ayatollahs illegal and enforces wide-ranging censorship of domestic and foreign reporting, is another blow at those who criticise the policy of the Islamic government.



The new map of Iran as seen by the banned newspaper *Ahanger*.

The attack on the left by leading government officials often takes the form of a rather crude scape-goating. Bani-Sadr told me that the left was to blame for the standstill in industry, and both he and Ghotbzadeh blamed the unrest among Turks, Arabs and Turcomans on leftist interference, avoiding the question of whether the demands of these people were legitimate or not. Their defence of current policy towards the Kurds sounded like Ethiopian officials legitimating their repressive policies in Eritrea on the grounds that the regional opposition forces were also 'agents' of foreign powers.

IN A TRAGIC IRONY many of those who were in the forefront of the struggle against the Shah are now once again on the receiving end of government repression and right-wing violence. Mohammad Reza Sa'adati, a member of the Kojahidin of the People guerrillas, who spent years in jail under the Shah, has now been arrested on charges of being a 'Soviet spy' and has the dubious distinction of being the first of the new political prisoners known to have undergone torture. Slogans calling for his execution have been written on walls in Tehran. Over a dozen members of the Socialist Workers Party, arrested weeks ago in the southern town of Ahvaz, still await trial, as does the poet Nasim Khaksar, who earlier spent eight years in the Shah's prisons. A lawyer I met had spent three years in jail, had been tortured by hanging on a cross – 'like Spartacus and his poor friends' as he put it to me – and had then had both his legs broken by SAVAK agents after his release. He was recently kidnapped by unknown assailants and taken up into the hills north of Tehran where he was badly burnt on his back and chest.

Mossadeq's grandson, lawyer Hedayat Matin-Daftari, who was flogged and thrown over the side of a mountain in 1967 and imprisoned by the Shah last year, had to flee last week into hiding in order to escape arrest after the National Democratic Front, of which he is one of the leaders, organised the demonstration to protest the closure of opposition papers. A few days earlier I had lunched with him and had found him, despite the evident tension in the country, to be quietly optimistic. He sensed, as other opposition members did, that the akhunds or religious leaders were overreaching themselves by interfering in so many areas of public life and by their apparent inability to run the country. Many people felt that despite the current government onslaught the left, allied with the movement for regional autonomy, could in the longer-run establish a democratic system. One Azerbaijani poet I met went so far as to argue the daring thesis that events in Iran would mean 'the end of Islam', as popular revulsion against the akhunds led to a backlash in the months ahead.

Some signs of such resistance can be seen on the streets of northern and central Tehran. Music banned on the state radio is available in cassette form, and even though this is the month of Ramadhan when all-day fasting is obligatory, stalls selling soft drinks are open. People were smoking and playing music in public, and hosts proudly produced the odd bottle of whisky or champagne. In the oilfields, so I was told by a reliable source, the government is taking no chances with the oil workers who demonstrated their power so effectively last year: there the workers' canteen remains open all day, Ramadhan or not.

Yet the power of the Islamic right must not

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be underestimated. Its appeal is not just an ideological one, since its strength rests on a set of institutions that retain great power at the neighbourhood level. Ayatollah Nuri, for example, explained how he could call on thousands of people all over Tehran who had been students at his lectures over the past few years, and the new anti-left tone of Khomeini's regime is transmitted not just over the radio but in the Friday sessions at the mosque and through local Islamic associations.

THE POSITION OF WOMEN illustrates the uncertain status of the new Islamic regime. Khomeini's claim before his return to Iran that Islam guarantees the equality of men and women was always untrue, given the theory and the practice of all Islamic societies. But the attempt to impose Muslim clothing, whether the cloak-like *chador* or the scarf-like *hejab*, was successfully resisted by the women's demonstrations of last March. Since that time, there has been no marked increase in the wearing of Muslim clothing by women in the centre and north of Tehran, and many women even in government offices remain without it.

However, Khomeini may well try to enforce the *hejab* in the future and he is reported to have told a women poet who visited him that he would do so after the Islamic constitution becomes law. In the meantime other factors are eating away at women's position. Although there are still women announcers on the radio, all solo women singers have been taken off the media – and Director Ghotbzadeh tried to tell me this was because they had all been connected with the Imperial Court. Women's sports have been virtually stopped, and the few women judges serving in the courts have been reallocated to other positions. A young male judge told me, with evident disgust, that once Muslim law is imposed in the courts the Islamic prescription that one man's testimony as a witness must be considered equal to that of two women will come into force. One women was elected to the 73-person Council of Experts now discussing the draft constitution, but she was a nominee of Khomeini's and her election poster was a tragi-comic one, showing two eyes and a nose emerging from behind a black *chador*.

Probably the gravest attack on women's position has come in the realm of employment, where discrimination, as in other countries, is justified on grounds of economic constraint. Additionally, the organised feminist tide that was so successful in March has not continued. Most left groups seem to regard the question of women as a secondary one, but while I saw no women at the Fedayin headquarters wearing headscarves the Mojahidin told me that all women who join their organisation must wear one.

One change the government will find hard to put through is the segregation of schools, since only 15 per cent of primary school teachers are men and an almost reverse situation operates in secondary education. But the everyday pressures on women continue and it is easy for the demagogues of the right to talk of women's emancipation as part of some 'alien' imposition on Iran. Even the late Dr Ali Shariati, supposedly the theorist of a new enlightened Islam, argues in his *Omat va Imamat* that woman's liberation is a plot by the western cosmetic monopolies to boost their exports to the third world. Here again, the power of Islamic reaction over women must not be underestimated and one has only to see the phalanxes of chanting black-cloaked women on right-wing demonstrations to realise that Khomeini and his people can mobilise large numbers of women for their cause, such as fascist movements in Europe did in the 1930s.

The position of the urban working class is, as yet, uncertain. Many factories are idle or running at a reduced level of output, and the masses of migrant workers who flocked to the cities to work in construction have been dispersed by the standstill in this sector, evident in the lines of unmoving cranes along the Tehran skyline. In the factories some of the workers' committees set up during the last months of the struggle against the Shah have continued to operate. But it seems that many of these have been taken over by the akhunds or by the Revolutionary Committees and no substantial organisations linking different factories have yet emerged to form the basis of a new trades union structure. The Islamic forces have been quick to see the need to pre-empt any threat from this source. While he fulminates against the left, Khomeini appeals to the workers in the name of Islam and a widely distributed poster depicts an industrial worker holding an Islamic banner beneath a quotation from the Koran promising a speedy victory.

The rhetoric of the regime places great emphasis on what it is doing for the *mostazifin*, a neologism based on the Arabic word for

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'weak', and usually translated as the 'deprived'. A classic populist concept, it is designed to appeal to the working class without thereby scaring off the other class allies of the Islamic movement. Yet it would seem that despite the immense sums of money available from oil, the new regime has not brought tangible benefits to these people. Loans for housing of up to £12,000 (300,000 Tomans) are available but only to those who can make a deposit of one tenth this amount. The economics correspondent of one pro-Islamic paper told me that apart from providing electricity of under 100 Kilowatts free of charge nothing had been done to benefit the poor in the six months since Khomeini came to power. Meanwhile inflation runs at over 30 per cent.

The standard themes of Islamic theorists are those familiar to right-wing populist, and indeed, fascist movements elsewhere. Bani-Sadr's 'Unitary Economics', a farrago of Islamic and socialist ideas, is little more than confusionist rhetoric, laced with some religious allusions, and has so far led to no concrete programme that could begin to solve Iran's economic problems. When I met him, Bani-Sadr laid great emphasis upon how Iran remained a dependent country in which imperialism still played a major role, but neither what he told me, nor what he had previously written, led me to believe that he has a coherent grasp of the Iranian economy. Earlier, he told me that the spirituality of Khomeini had an important consolatory role to play given the serious material privations to which the people would be exposed.

The oft-heard slogan that 'There is No Right nor Left in Islam' and Khomeini's appeals for Islamic unity are the conventional fare of overtly fascist regimes, coupled as they are with attacks on all opponents as being 'enemies of Islam' and with a facile attribution of links with imperialism to all who question his views. Although he hardly ever mentions Iran, much of Khomeini's Islamic rhetoric is very nationalistic and his favourite ploy is to attack the left for being western-influenced and alien to Iran's traditions. His denunciations of the intelligentsia, especially writers and lawyers, and his attacks on the press, indicate a willingness to stifle all critical discussion on the grounds that they are part of an 'imperialist conspiracy'. Yet so devalued have such accusations become that more than one Iranian I met was able to argue at great length how Khomeini himself had been installed by the CIA. . .

IT IS AS YET HARD to evaluate the forces opposed to Khomeini, but they certainly go beyond the organised parties of the left. While Ayatollah Taleqani seems to have fallen into line behind Khomeini's rightist crusade, Ayatollah Sharriat-Madari, who called on his followers to boycott the recent elections, remains a powerful force, especially in his native Azerbaijan and among the estimated 1.5 million Azerbaijanis who live in Tehran. The other non-Persian nationalities are also resistant to the centralising tendencies of the Islamic government, and the Kurds in particular are well-armed and should be able to resist the central government for a long time. While they stress that they do not want to secede from Iran, the Kurds do want some form of substantial regional autonomy, and the draft constitution, offering only some ill-defined local councils which bear no relation to the nationalities themselves, is clearly inadequate to their demands.

The left itself, based in Tehran but with substantial provincial support, comprises a number of competing groups. The National Democratic Front, which broke away from the National Front in March, comprises a number of liberal and socialist groups. Although not a party, and formally nearer the centre than other left organisations, it has so far been the most consistently critical of the Khomeini government. Not only did the NDF call for a boycott of both the referendum on the Islamic Republic and the Council of Experts elections, but it took the initiative in organising the protests against censorship that sparked the recent clashes.

The two main former guerrilla groups, the Fedayin and the Mojahidin, enjoy substantial support among young people and could probably mount some kind of armed resistance to a right-wing onslaught. But their leadership,

Camera Press

Kurdish fighter: a 'foreign agent', but better armed than the Iranian armies

drawn from people who have spent much of their adult life in jail, is inexperienced and they have been indecisive in their attitude to Khomeini's regime, trying to conserve their militant following while not breaking completely with the government. Like the Peronist guerrillas who emerged into the open after the fall of the Argentinian military dictatorship in 1973, they have found it difficult to turn their undoubted prestige as militant fighters against the old regime into a durable political movement.

The oldest and wiliest of the left groups is the Tudeh, in effect the Communist Party. Founded in 1941 their leadership is much older than that of other groups, and they evidently have a substantial organisation. They have chosen to back Khomeini without major reservation at this time: 'We consider him on balance progressive, and since we cannot lead, we have to choose,' was how one party leader explained it to me. They remain in the most traditional sense a pro-Soviet party, something that must do them immense harm in the current Iranian situation where anti-Russian feeling runs high. It is unlikely that their concessions to Khomeini will in the end spare them from the force of the rightist onslaught, and their paper is among those closed this week. Indeed, on Monday the authorities sealed the offices of the party.

The core of Khomeini's support lies in the poorer, southern districts of Tehran and in the cities running southwards from there along the edge of the great desert that forms the core of Iran – Qom, Isfahan, Kashan, Yazd, Shiraz. The second main holy city after Qom, Mashad, may also favour him and the resistance to his concent of an Islamic Republic in the rest of the country is still fragmented. But with the economy in a major recession, and unrest in the regions, the initiative is slipping from the government's hands.

It is in these circumstances that the state of the army and other repressive units becomes of major importance. Most estimates I heard indicate that about half of the pre-revolutionary army, say upwards of 150,000 men, remains in existence and there certainly seemed to be plenty of soldiers in the barracks I saw in Tehran and in the mountains to the north. The air force is still flying missions, although Foreign Minister Yazdi categorically denied the reports put out by opposition papers that some dozens of US technicians had been brought back to the country. The army and air force have, however, lost most of their top commanders, and it will certainly take time to rebuild the esprit de corps and the command structure previously reliant on the Shah which were shattered in the revolutionary period.

An extremely ominous development is the growth of irregular military units, recruiting young unemployed men to carry out vigilante duties. Security Chief and Deputy Premier Mostafa Chamran is said to command a force called the Regiment of Youth, and a group named the Black Shirts has been growing in south Tehran. The Jamshidabad barracks in Tehran are the centre of another semi-official force called the Army of Guards, and then there are both the Guards of the Islamic Revolution, organised by the government, and the Committee Guards, under individual mollahs and district chiefs. Ill-trained and divided as these units may be, and incapable of facing seriously armed foes like the Kurds, they are nonetheless a formidable force for urban repression and can be sure of further expansion in a time of high unemployment. In late July up to 60,000 of such irregulars paraded through the streets of Tehran. In a clampdown on the left it would be to these elements, as much as to the regular army, that Khomeini would be likely to turn. Equally sinister is the rise of a new secret police organisation called SAVAME – SAVAK with one word altered ('Country' changed to 'Nation'). According to one man who recently came out of Evin jail, the imprisoned members of the former Counter-Espionage section of SAVAK were summoned to the central office there some weeks ago and asked to start working again, for SAVAME. Some of the indictments against left-wingers now in jail are based on old SAVAK files.

Amid the clamour and confusion of contemporary Iran, it has become obvious, more quickly than was generally expected, just how incapable Khomeini and his associates are of running Iran and how quickly they are falling back, turbaned akhunds and western-educated ministers alike, on demagogy about 'foreign plots' and on repression. Unwilling to guarantee basic democratic rights to the press, the opposition or the nationalities, or to implement a serious programme of social change, they are dragging the country towards a bloodbath the outcome of which no one can predict. Khomeini may believe that Allah is Great, but it certainly seems to be the Devil who is working overtime in Iran today.

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LAW
Paddy O'Connor

One of our most basic civil liberties is being undermined

Who shall have the body?

THE WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS has acquired over four or more centuries a reputation as a bastion of English civil liberties. The legal authority Blackstone described it as 'the great and efficacious writ in all manner of illegal confinement' and Lord Chief Justice Denman proclaimed in 1839 that it had been 'for ages effectual to an extent never known in any other country'. But recent experiences suggest that it is being seriously undermined. While the number of applications for habeas corpus doubled in the last 20 years – from 115 in 1958-67 to 229 in 1968-77 – the proportion of writs granted declined dramatically – from 25 (21.74 per cent) in the first decade to 18 (7.86 per cent) in the second.

The writ, which originated as a demonstration of the sovereign's power to protect the liberty of the subject, is now being administered by the Divisional Court. It is most important in two fields: the detention of suspects at police stations for questioning, and the expulsion of alleged illegal immigrants. The former is a crucial battleground for suspects' rights. Our trial system allows individuals to be convicted as a result of oral or written confessions alone, and it is not unusual for police to extract 'confessions' simply by detaining and questioning individuals for long enough to frighten or harass them into admitting guilt (whether or not they are, in fact, guilty).

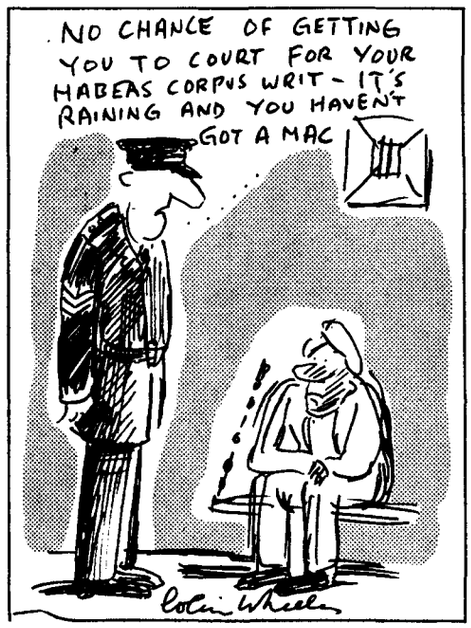
The only statutory time limit is set out in the Magistrates' Courts Act of 1952, which requires the authorities to produce suspects before a court 'as soon as practicable'. But while it ought to be practicable to do so within 24 hours, except at a weekend, police often keep suspects inside for much longer – and the Act has no teeth to prevent them. In his evidence to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, Sir David McNee, head of the Metropolitan Police, argued that police should be allowed to detain people for up to 72 hours (tacitly admitting that was what they did anyway) and even longer with a magistrate's permission. In justifying this draconian proposition, he argued that if detainees felt aggrieved, they could always apply for a writ of habeas corpus:

> This is by no means a legal remedy that has fallen into disuse, but a real and available remedy. In 1977 there were 55 applications to the Divisional Court for writs of habeas corpus.

McNee was right to say that an application for habeas corpus was a detainee's only means of legal redress, but he failed to note that it rarely had the required effect. In 1977 only *three* writs were granted.

Immigration officers use their discretionary powers to lock up people they consider to be 'illegal entrants' (which in practice includes not only people who are stopped coming into the country, but also those who are picked up later, under suspicion of having entered without permission). They can then ship them out of the country without a trial – and here too the only remedy is habeas corpus.

TO APPLY FOR A WRIT, a detainee's lawyer must file an affidavit with the Divisional Court complaining that the detention is illegal. By tradition, the court gives precedence to these applications over all other



business, daily at 10.30 am or 2 pm. If a *prima facie* case of illegality is shown, the court ought to issue the writ. This does not amount to an order to release the detainee, but to produce him before a court, together with a 'Return' justifying the detention. The Court then decides whether to order release.

In practice what frequently happens is that the court orders an adjournment rather than issuing the writ – ostensibly to give the police time to prepare their justification. From the detainee's point of view, of course, speed is of the essence and an adjournment can be tantamount to a denial of the remedy. In a recent, typical case, a Mr Kemp Jones was arrested on a Thursday and held at a police station over the weekend. On Sunday his lawyers told the police they would be applying for a writ of habeas corpus the next day – to pre-empt an adjournment by the Court. Nevertheless, the court *did* order an adjournment, although the judge knew the police had by that time had 23 hours' notice. Before the next hearing Mr Kemp Jones was charged with conspiracy to rob, making the writ unnecessary. He had been held without charge for a total of four and a half days.

This widespread practice of adjournment means that the court can avoid even *seeming* to come into conflict with the police. Embarrassing questions need not be asked and the fact that the police regularly detain people for long periods is less likely to come to the public notice. Lawyers have tended to lose faith in the remedy and applications are treated as annoying disruptions of the 'normal business' of the court. Even more insidiously damaging are the fetters on the court's powers. In criminal cases, the Divisional Court has no power to investigate beyond the 'Return', so a sufficiently cynical police officer could draft a dishonest one without fear of being found out.

IN IMMIGRATION CASES, which come under civil jurisdiction, the Divisional Court has statutory power to investigate into the facts of a case to see if the detention is lawful. But this, too, has been undermined. In the case of *Hussein* in 1976, the Divisional Court under Lord Widgery ruled that if the Home Secretary had reasonable grounds for suspecting an immigrant was not the person he claimed to be (a fairly common accusation), the court would not inquire further to see whether, in fact, he was. It also ruled that the burden of proof was on the suspected person to show that the Home Secretary's belief was one no reasonable Home Secretary could hold – an almost impossible burden to discharge. In a recent case, a Mr Ejaz and a Mr Iqbal were accused of being impostors and therefore liable to deportation. They protested that they really were who they claimed to be, but the Home Secretary decided to deport them. They challenged that decision by applying for habeas corpus, but the Divisional Court refused to investigate at all once it was satisfied that the Home Secretary had some evidence to justify his decision and was acting in good faith. The Court of Appeal agreed and the House of Lords refused even to grant leave to appeal. Many hundreds of similar expulsions are pending.

Habeas corpus is essentially a common law remedy, but in the past when its potency has waned, Parliament has stepped in with reinforcing legislation – the Habeas Corpus Acts of 1679 and 1816, both for 'better securing the liberty of the subject'. We have seen that the Divisional Court today cannot be trusted always to administer the writ in accordance with the spirit of the law, so there is a strong case for further reinforcement. The courts should have a *duty* (not just a power, which is likely to be ignored) to investigate any dispute of fact in both civil and criminal applications. The burden of proving disputed facts and of justifying detention should be on the detainer beyond reasonable doubt. No adjournment should be imposed without the applicant's consent if the police have been given the necessary minimum notice to attend the hearing. Every time a writ is issued, the detainer ought to provide a 'Return', even if the detention has ended before it can be presented to court: this could later be used as evidence if the detainee wants to sue for damages. To improve access, all circuit and High Court judges should be empowered to issue the writ and solicitors (not just barristers) should have the right to make applications.

The Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure may recommend new safeguards for suspects, but that would not lessen the importance of habeas corpus as a fundamental right. What chance of an initiative by the present government, which seems more concerned with strengthening the powers of police and immigration authorities than with defending individual liberty?

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Crimes against thirty million

THE ANCIENT CUSTOM of mutilating female children is still widespread in more than 30 African countries. Between 30 and 60 million women and girls have undergone the operation, which is medically indefensible and known to cause severe physical and psychological damage in countless cases.[1] Its origins are obscure: Moslems tend to claim it is demanded by their religion, yet it certainly predates Islam. The main practical justification is that it represses female sexuality and keeps women faithful to their husbands. There are three different versions of the operation[2]. The most extreme, 'Pharaonic Circumcision', occurs mainly in the Horn of Africa and Sudan, but has also been reported in Kenya, Mali and Nigeria. In Sudan, the Pharaonic has been outlawed since 1946 but it is still commonly practised there, while the 'Sunna', regarded as a mild alternative and recommended by the Prophet Mohammed, is scarcely less horrific. HANNY KLEIN, who has just returned from Sudan, recounts her conversations on the subject with educated and otherwise enlightened members of that society.

WHEN I FIRST expressed interest in the subject, I was invited almost immediately to attend a circumcision in a house in a middle-class neighbourhood. I arrived only five minutes after the actual surgery had taken place. There was a party atmosphere, with much gaiety, chatter and delicious refreshments. A few men were in the outer room and in the inner room a number of festively dressed women were sitting around a bed. A frail, bloodless looking ten year old with the hennaed hands of a bride was lying motionless, her eyes wide and stunned. A midwife, proudly efficient in white, was plainly the heroine of this tableau and she was treated with great respect by everyone entering the room.

One of the neighbours told me that there had been a Sunna only. The child, she said, had had a local anaesthetic directly into the clitoris, and now felt no pain. She would feel a great deal later, however. Had the child been told what would happen to her? Yes, and she had been happy because she received many gifts. She would be given anti-biotics and pain-killers if she needed them.

My informant, a young teacher of English at a secondary school, told me of her own Pharaonic circumcision at the age of four. She had been given no anaesthetic and the pain had been terrible. When she realised what was happening to her, she had been terribly frightened. Three women held her down, and there was nothing she could do. After it was over she felt very strange. She thought it would grow back. She had not thought it would be like that. She would ask her mother, 'When will I get back to normal?' They used to laugh at her. Everything felt so different. Even passing water was extremely difficult – the opening was so very small. It would take her half an hour to empty her bladder. Later, sex was extremely frightening. She had known there would be more pain, and it took five months to achieve complete penetration. She still did not care for sex even though it was not painful after that. Childbirth was not unusually difficult and she did not allow herself to be sewn shut again because she did not want to suffer any more.

She had three daughters of her own. One had been circumcised – a Sunna. She said she discussed the matter with a female doctor after reading many books, and the doctor felt the operation was medically necessary for all women, that the child would be too sensitive otherwise, and that the operation would prevent discharges and make the sex organs cleaner. She had read religious books about Sunna, and the Prophet was in favour of it.

What would she do about her other daughters? Perhaps she would not have it done to them. She did not think that being sensitive was a bad thing, and she would have preferred not to have been circumcised herself. She felt she was missing something in marriage, and that she was not enjoying life as she could. Some men complained of women being cold; her husband never said anything. Was she able to have orgasms? She had no idea what they were.

Sudan, she believed (mistakenly), was the only country where the operation was still done. There was so much talk about it now, she said bitterly, but it did not help. The Sudanese were still proud of the Pharaonic. They thought it protected girls from shame. But it didn't. Women still had sex before marriage, and there was infidelity too. Her own family disapproved strongly when she had only a Sunna done on her eldest child. She had delayed until the girl was 13, which was practically unheard of. Finally she had given in. Now, her second daughter was mortally afraid, and every night would come to lie down with her and ask: 'Will I be circumcised? If I don't have it, will they laugh at me?' She would tell her that it need not be done, knowing it was not a promise, but that if she did not say something of the kind, the child would not sleep.

No harm in a minor excision?

A MIDDLE-AGED, Moscow-educated economist discussed the two types of mutilation with me. He agreed that Pharaonic circumcision was a terrible thing, and cited a psychological text he had read. It was about a woman, who became paralysed whenever her husband wanted intercourse; the psychiatrist attributed this to the extreme mutilation she had suffered. Some families cut away only half the clitoris, the economist informed me. Would not this procedure have some harmful psychological effects as well? Perhaps, he shrugged, but he didn't see why it should. It was only a little piece. Did he not think that cutting off a little piece of his penis might have a harmful psychological effect on him? He looked shocked, and agreed that it would.

A teacher at the Port Sudan Secondary School for Boys told me he had five daughters. Yes, they had all been pharaonised, because this was demanded by his religion. It was good for them, he said. It would help them to conceive. How did he feel about the pain that they must suffer? He chose not to understand and abruptly changed the subject.

An Indonesian woman married to a Sudanese businessman related a conversation she had had with some Sudanese teenagers. They assumed that she too had been circumcised and were horrified to find she had not. 'Oh, you must have it done!' they pleaded. 'If you do not, your husband will take a second wife, or he will go to prostitutes.'

A Yugoslav-educated sea captain told me he much preferred European, unmutilated women to the pharaonised Sudanese ones. The sight of a pharaonised vagina disgusted him, he said, and he failed to see how any man could even function sexually with such a woman. No, he would never do such a thing to his children. It was absolutely barbaric. However, further questioning revealed that he saw nothing wrong with clitoridectomy. The women could still feel, after all.

A headmaster at a boys' school spoke of his marriage to a pharaonised woman. It had taken him three weeks to achieve penetration, and it was very painful for his wife. She bled a great deal. When we asked him how he felt about this, a look of self-disgust clouded his face, and he said that suffering was stimulation to some men in a strange way, because it was preferable to no reaction at all. When his wife gave birth, he said, they slit her open, and after the child had been delivered, the grandmother called in a special midwife to resew her wounded vagina even tighter than before. This, the grandmother felt, would enhance her womanhood, make her more like a virgin again, and stimulate him, her husband, more.The penetrations after the birth of their two children had been even more agonising to his wife. Now she took pills so that she would not have another child. She was very frightened. He felt that all forms of circumcision were wrong, and he longed to find a way to avoid circumcision for his children. He had thought of breaking communication with his family for one or two years during the time of his daughters' supposed circumcision, then telling them that they had been circumcised as expected.

I was told by one physician of a small girl who had come to her attention, who had been

[1]The World Health Organisation reports that Pharaonic circumcision can cause shock, haemorrhage, tetanus and other forms of infection, complications in childbirth and implantation of dermoid cysts.

[2]The three types are (1) Circumcision proper, known as 'Sunna', which involves the circumferential excision of the clitoral prepuce; (2) Excision, which involves excision of the prepuce and the glans clitoris, or even of the clitoris itself, together with all or part of the labia minora; (3) Pharaonic circumcision, otherwise known as infibulation, involves removal of the whole of the clitoris, the labia minora and some or all of the labia majora. The two sides of the vulva are then stitched together by silk or catgut (in the Sudan) or by thorns (in Somalia), leaving a very small opening, often no greater in circumference than a matchstick, for passing urine and menstrual blood. Women who are pharaonised need to be cut open before they can bear children, and are often sewn up again afterward, to leave the opening as small as before.

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given a mild form of Sunna. The girl had had so much shaming for this by her peers that she was constantly bothering her mother to be 'properly circumcised' like the others.

'It makes life smoother'

DR. SIDAHAMED EL HASSAN, a physician, found the practice of circumcision totally indefensible on medical grounds and described some of the horrible consequences he encountered in his daily practice. Circumcision, he said, was absolutely hindering female emancipation, and was preventing the development of the country. On the other hand, he also felt that sexually sensitive women were a detriment to society, and said that women would be more responsible citizens under the pressures of Western influences if they were not sexually sensitive. He was married to two pharaonised women, and thought the operation made life smoother by removing sexual tension. He was busy with his medical practice and could not devote himself to his wives too often. This way he could have sex with them when he wanted, but they made no demands on him. He acknowledged that the sexual response of a mutilated woman could not be compared with that of an unmutilated one, and preferred unmutilated women.

He had five daughters and, finding himself in a dilemma, had withdrawn from the decision of what was to be done with them. The grandmothers had decided, and four daughters had been pharaonised so far. There had been no complications except for some fever and sepsis, he informed me in a detached manner; but they were still premenstrual.

I asked him to described the procedure, and he recounted it in a matter-of-fact voice, but with some show of nervousness. It was done during the summer in a special house at a resort. The children were taken there on holiday by their mothers and the arrangements had been made by the grandmothers. The children were not told beforehand. They were taken by force and without anaesthetic. It was all quite brutal and primitive. What were the children like when they returned? How had they changed? They were less hyper-active, he replied. That was the only change he noticed. Nothing was ever discussed between him and his daughters afterwards. He preferred it that way. After all, it was women's business. He presented his mother as the wisest woman in the house, and said he would not oppose her, even to intercede on behalf of his remaining uncircumcised daughter.

This doctor's mother, a woman of about 70 years whose face was lined with deep, multiple tribal scars, had been pharaonised at the age of seven. She vividly described the details of an unanaesthetised village operation. The pain had been so great she said, that when they gave her a piece of wood to bite on, she bit it in half. She remembered having being sewn shut so tightly that the opening closed three times, and she had had to be reopened each time to be able to urinate. Scarring had been so severe that her husband was unable to penetrate her, and she finally had to be cut open. She still felt that circumcision was a good thing, and that it should be done to the children because it would keep them clean and prevent the uterus from dropping out. She was afraid they would get dirt and worms in the vagina if they were not circumcised. She also told me that men would not accept an uncut wife, and that they would be more pleased if the girl was sewn shut, because it was proof of virginity. In her village the chief had told the men that it would be better to have Sunna done on their daughters, but they had all refused.

Soffia, the second of the doctor's wives, a teacher at the Girls' Secondary School, said she had been subjected to a Pharaonic circumcision at the age of six. She remembered being very happy at the prospect, expecting something good to happen. She had been given many gifts of new clothes and perfumes. When they cut her, there were five women to hold her down, one at the head and one each at the arms and legs. She had been given no anaesthetic of any sort, and she had not realised the enormity of what was happening to her until the midwife began cutting. The operation had taken a quarter of an hour. She did not remember her feelings or thoughts, she said. She had wanted the pain to stop, but it had remained with her for a long time.

Sex had been extremely painful for her at first, and it had taken ten days to achieve penetration. She said she enjoyed sex, but did not understand the question when I asked her if she was able to achieve orgasm. When I explained what an orgasm was, she told me no, she had no sexual sensation whatever, but she enjoyed her husband coming to her, because she was very jealous of the other wife. She was curious about orgasms. Did her inability have anything to do with the operation? I explained that it did. Some women had an appetite for men, she said, but to her it was only a duty.

She had had seven children, all with terrible pain. Each time she had been sewn shut and re-opened again. She wanted three more children. She asked if the birth pain was related to her circumcision. When I told her that some unmutilated women experienced little pain in giving birth, she expressed total disbelief. She expected a lot of resistance from her family when she decided not to circumcise the last of her three girls. She had not discussed the matter with her husband, because she was afraid that he would give her no support, and she realised that the best she might hope for was the compromise of a Sunna. She personally knew of no family where the girls had been left unmutilated. People said that sewing the girls shut would protect them against rape.

A young school teacher described the Pharaonic circumcision she had had at the age of six. Her sisters had all been sunnaed, she said, but when her turn had come, a very famous midwife who was an expert in the Pharaonic procedure was visiting the area, so her family had her pharaonised.

Atmosphere of terror

DR EL TAHIR ABDEL RAHIM, psychiatrist, a genial gentleman of the old school, discoursed freely on the generalised psychiatric problems he encountered in his daily practice. It was obvious, he said, that when you removed one of the most important parts of the body at such an age, that in itself was associated with all the anxieties of a child, quite apart from the pain. The screaming at the time of surgery affected the other children and heightened the atmosphere of terror. When a girl grew up knowing that a vital part of her body had been removed, puberty was not a happy experience. When a girl first menstruated, she experienced much psychic and physical pain. The orifice was not large enough to pass the menstrual blood. Apathy and depression were much more extreme than among normal adolescents.

When the marriage commenced, he said, sexual contact was associated with much pain and anxiety, and this blighted the relationship. The entire family was anxious – the girl, her husband, the parents. Men often had impotency problems. They were equally afraid. They were really doing something abnormal and painful to them as well, and many actually did fail, because of the fear that they would be inadequate to the task. It was a great shame to a Sudanese man not to achieve penetration.

The psychiatrist told me of a case he had recently treated. A young man, a prison guard, had married a remote relative. He had failed to penetrate correctly, and after continued frantic efforts had caused much injury around the wife's sexual organs and eventually created a false fissure. He had thought his relationship was normal, but he had actually been using an open wound. The girl had experienced tremendous pain each time, and eventually after five years of this had come to the psychiatrist's attention with severe suicidal depression. She had never told her husband what was happening. She had been too ashamed, and had not wanted to discourage him. At the hospital, her vagina had been opened surgically, and the false fissure allowed to heal. Such surgical procedures were usually done secretly, the psychistrist said, to save the reputation of the husband.

The paradox, as he described it, was that the women felt guilty because they could not function normally. Men themselves often felt guilt at experiencing pleasure at the expense of their wives' pain. Feelings of rejection and alienation were common to both. He said he could tell most easily whether a girl was circumcised or not, simply by her bearing, by the way she spoke, by her manner, by her confidence. It affected the total growth of her personality, her will, her self-image. He felt terribly sorry for women.

Circumcision was a criminal act, he went on to say. That was why his own daughters would

the Leveller

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be sunnaed. He would allow only a small part of the clitoris to be taken, the part that protruded. He felt that a large clitoris caused a lot of trouble. Girls fell from their bicycles because of sexual over-stimulation if their clitorises were not cut. They were constantly being brought into the hospital, having fallen off in a sexual swoon*. Cutting off a centimetre or so of the clitoris did not affect their ability to have pleasure, he said. They didn't feel they had lost anything. Asked whether he might not experience a sense of loss if a centimetre of his penis were cut off, he looked pained, and conceded that he would. But he stuck to his guns. He was certain that a girl who was completely uncut was not very marriageable.

Dr Mohammed Said el Rayah, gynaecologist, described his frustrations as a physician. The Pharaonic could hide a lot of diseases, prolapses, tumours, anything. These women could not be properly diagnosed, because it was impossible to introduce instruments to examine them. So they remained untreated, and, of course, many died as a result.

Dr Aziz Malik, another gynaecologist, showed me a seven year old girl who had been brought into the hospital two days previously, haemorrhaging profusely after a village Pharaonic. She had required a full 36 hours of transfusions. A wild-eyed, babbling child was carried into the room in the arms of a woman attendant, with her legs flexed and painfully spread apart. She cried out in agony as she was placed on the examining table as gently and carefully as possible. As the doctor exposed her enormously swollen outer labia, she tensed her body with terror, trying to cover herself, spasmodically warding him off with her frail arms. Between the swollen labia, dark sutures were barely visible; otherwise, nothing abnormal could be seen. It was her violated eyes and her pleading voice that froze my blood.

At Dr Malik's house, I met three of his five daughters. There was no mistaking that they were unmutilated. Their entire stance, their expression, the quality of their movements were totally different from those of the other girls I had seen.

Nairah Mobarra, a Czech-educated young doctor was a remarkably competent and energetic lady. She told me that she saw frequent infections, tetanus, haemorrhage and fever resulting from circumcision. She felt that the notion of circumcision protecting a girl's virtue was total nonsense. A girl who was not a virgin at marriage needed only to have herself sewn shut again to create the appearance that she was.

She herself had been pharaonised at seven, without anaesthetic. She had blocked the experience out of her mind and remembered very little except for the pain, especially the first urination. She planned to be married eventually, and knew that there would be more pain and other complications. I commented on her obvious psychological health. Well, she said, her mother suffered so much more: she had had eight children and had been sewn shut after each one. 'I know that I will not have to suffer that.' She would definitely leave any children of her own uncircumcised.

Haja Kashif Badri, one of the founders of the organised Women's Movement in Sudan, appeared to be a most assertive and strong-willed lady although she too had been pharaonised. She said she would not have her daughters cut, nor even have their ears pierced. She had told her family in plain terms that she would put anyone who touched them in jail. Her mother-in-law had complained bitterly. She has persuaded some of her friends to leave their daughters uncut, and there was much secrecy involved in these manoeuvres. The mothers worried terribly when the girls reached marriageable age, but in fact educated Sudanese men were often delighted to find that their brides were uncircumcised. Speaking of her own experience, she said that she knew it was difficult for a man to satisfy a pharaonised women but that with patience, effort and understanding it could be done.

Finally, I spoke to Mr Nakasoub, an influential Moslem leader in Port Sudan. He assured me there was nothing in the Koran about the Pharaonic. It was a custom brought over from Egypt in ancient times, and had nothing whatsoever to do with religion. There was a religious book, the Prophet's work, which was called the Sunna and which mentioned eight degrees of circumcision short of the Pharaonic, the first degree being no more than a ritual scratch, which satisfied the requirements of the religion completely. He himself was very much against that barbarous practice, the Pharaonic, and in his religious capacity advocated the mildest form of the Sunna. Did he have any daughters? Indeed he had. What had he done about them? They have all been pharaonised. How was this possible in view of his stated beliefs? One could not go against custom, he said. Custom was too strong in the people. No-one could defy custom.

* In our three months' stay in North-East Sudan, we did not encounter a single girl on a bicycle. We can only conclude that girls are either not given bicycles there generally, or that they have indeed all fallen off.

MIDDLE EAST — Brzezinski goes it alone

Claudia Wright writes from Washington: Andrew Young's was the only voice powerful enough to reach President Carter with an interpretation of American foreign policy substantially different from that of Zbigniew Brzezinski. With Young gone, Cyrus Vance on his way to retirement and the Near Eastern Bureau of the State Department thoroughly chastened, the National Security Adviser is now able to explain to the President, without anyone left to gainsay him, that over the past four weeks the United States has made considerable headway in the region.

In response to threats from Libya and Algeria substantially to cut oil exports to the US, Brzezinski encouraged the chief of naval operations to order American fleet manoeuvres within the Gulf of Sirte, three miles off the Libyan coast at Benghazi. At least five separate days of naval movements were ordered over the past month.

Brzezinski quietly let King Hassan of Morocco know that the United States would not object to the use of American jet fighters and other arms in his takeover of the Western Saharan territory which Mauritania has decided to cede to the Polisario Front. The Security Adviser has also conveyed the message that the more Morocco unsettles the Algerian border 'in hot pursuit of Polisario guerrillas' the better the White House would like it.

As far as the PLO is concerned, Brzezinski believes that the Organisation can be splintered into ineffectiveness by resisting negotiations with the right wing and relying on Mossad and the Israeli army to destroy the left wing. As a false lure to Arafat, even Ambassador Young has served his purpose.

Brzezinski has told the president that Syria presents no credible threat to the Camp David framework without Soviet arms and economic support.

That leaves Iraq. Until two weeks ago the White House was concerned that Iraq might be able to provide the support for Syria which the Soviet Union would not. Rhetorically this was the objective of the Syrian-Iraqi unity talks which Saddam Hussein, the new Iraqi President, characterised early in July as leading to 'a single state, a single army, a single ministry of foreign affairs, a single national anthem, and a single national flag'. But that was before the purge began.

Between 12 July, when interrogations commenced, and 8 August, when 21 men were shot by firing squad, Hussein carried out a purge of the senior party organisations in Baghdad, the Cabinet ministries, press and regional administrative organs. Altogether, in addition to the 21 executed, 33 were sentenced to prison terms of up to 15 years, and 13 were released after interrogation.

Five members of the Revolutionary Command Council, the regime's leadership, were among the alleged conspirators shot, and a large group of economic planners and domestic policy officials were eliminated. Three Foreign Ministry ambassadors have been purged, but few members of the armed forces. Hussein has reshuffled the senior posts in the intelligence service and the Interior Ministry, but there has been no sign of any military disturbance.

In Baghdad, where I observed the final week of the drama, it has been possible to piece together a story of internal Ba'ath Party factionalism, which threatened Hussein, not so much with immediate removal – there is no evidence that any of the 'plotters' intended that – as with political constraints and the possibility that they might outvote him on key issues.

From Washington the perspective has been predictably different. Officials, who knew little of the Islamic sects until the Shah's overthrow, claim to find signs of the 'plot' in the Iraqi Shi'ite demonstrations in Najaf early in the year, in agitation in the Kurdish areas along the Iranian border, and in the hapless Iraqi Communist Party, whose two Cabinet representatives were removed before the purge, its daily newspaper closed, and its members in exile attacked by Iraqi agents. A crackdown on Communists is the stuff of which good relations with the US are made, and some officials have jumped to the belief that Hussein has outwitted a leftist, militant faction, and may now be moving in the same direction as Saudi Arabia.

One widely accepted account of the Iraqi events, largely a figment of the Egyptian imagination, has identified the source of the conspiracy in Damascus. It is said, for example, that at least three of the chief conspirators, Adnan Hussein, Mohammed Ayish, and Muhi Hussein Machadi, had close links with the Syrian President, and that Assad had promised them money as well as military support if they called for it. The Syrians have gone to great lengths to deny any part in the plot. This is probably so.

In Saddam Hussein's office, aides say that among American officials they regard Brzezinski as the most dangerous, and Hussein has despatched envoys around the Middle East this week to explain the recent events and assure doubters of Iraq's stability and firmness in opposition to the Egyptian-Israeli pact. To those inclined to share Brzezinski's scepticism, they say that Saddam Hussein can be counted on now to exercise power in office a lot longer than either Brzezinski or his President.

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London Diary

☐ Once again, socialists should be grateful to Lord Denning, the Master of the Rolls. As he gets older, he gets more and more impatient of the cant with which most judges disguise their feelings. In his widely-applauded dictum last week in the case of Rossminster v. Inland Revenue he blew to pieces the stale old nonsense that English law protects rich and poor alike. The invasion by taxmen of the homes and offices of tax consultants was, as Lord Denning very clearly understands, a gross breach of the inviolable principle of English law that an Englishman's taxhaven is his castle. The fact that the break-ins were, as the judge in a lower court absurdly noticed, envisaged and permitted by a law passed through Parliament in 1976 was, of course, quite irrelevant. As Lord Denning observed in a brilliant flash of relevance: 'The law was passed by a very small majority.' He might also have added that it was passed by a Labour Government, and was therefore suspect from the outset. 'There has been no seizure like it since 1763', said Lord Denning. He meant, of course, that there has been no seizure like it affecting people of substance.

In 1972, for instance, following the bombing of a barracks at Aldershot, the homes of a number of socialists were invaded at 5 a.m. by police under a general warrant allowing them to search for explosives. No explosives were found, but books, family photographs, private letters, even the contents of carpet sweepers were seized. No charges followed. Splitters and sectarians can be heard asking the ridiculous question: where were the Lord Dennings to protect these people from arbitrary seizure by general warrant? The answer of course is that not one of the people raided could lay claim to a single penny invested in discretionary trusts in the Channel Islands. How on earth could they expect the protection of judges?

I was, however, a little surprised to hear Lord Denning cite the case of John Wilkes as a precedent for his decision. John Wilkes was a rebel, and was hated by the government of the day. The Rossminster Group, on the other hand, since it is composed almost entirely of tax lawyers, is very friendly to the government. One of the people raided, Tom Benyon, is a Tory MP. So is Peter Rees, Minister of State at the Treasury and former adviser to the Rossminster Group.

I see that Lord Hailsham, the Lord Chancellor, considers the Rossminster case 'so important' that he is summoning the Law Lords back from the grouse moors to hear the appeal from Denning's decision. Well, the case *is* probably the most important in the whole history of tax consultancy. And a Lord Chancellor in a Cabinet which is headed by, and composed almost entirely of tax lawyers, must act quickly.

☐ In the next few months hundreds of thousands of people in this country will see *The China Syndrome*. Nothing could be better. The film is not just about the nuclear industry. It is about information and the extravagant methods used by television news stations to suppress it. I shall be surprised if anyone who sees the film ever again believes a single word from a public relations officer of a big company, especially a nuclear company. And that will be to everyone's advantage.

The reaction from the nuclear authorities has been predictable. I specially enjoyed a letter in the *Guardian* from R. A. Flint of Leicester who describes himself as 'a member of senior staff of the Nuclear Power Company'. 'The facts illustrate', he writes, 'that in the sphere of large-scale electricity power production the dangers to life and health from the peaceful harnessing of nuclear energy are very materially less than those that attach to methods using coal, oil or even water'.

What Mr Flint means is that up to now less people have died in nuclear power stations than in coal mines or oil wells. That's true enough, but it's not quite the point is it? It's the *potential* danger if anything goes wrong in a nuclear power station which is incomparably more terrible than in any other form of power. For nuclear power involves radiation and the escape of large quantities of radioactive material can kill millions now and millions more in the future. The beauty of *The China Syndrome* is that it proves to anyone with common sense who is not a member of senior staff of the Nuclear Power Company that nuclear power stations at the moment cannot be built safe from human error; and that the secrecy which surrounds them is devised, in the main, to stop us finding that out.

☐ I wrote last time in praise of David Gower. Now I discover that however brilliant he is with the bat, David Gower is shockingly dense about his fellow human beings. In Sunday's *Observer* story, which reveals that several top English cricketers have agreed to play in a bogus 'Test' tournament in South Africa, Gower is quoted as saying:

> I'm not sure yet whether I'll be going. If I do, the sole object will be to play cricket. I have no wish to get involved in politics.

David Gower must know that in South Africa sport and politics are inseparable; that sport has always been a central area for the public relations antics of the government; that black and white cricketers are treated as different species; and that the only reason for the lavish offer made to Gower and the others is to boost the fading image of apartheid. If he doubts me, let him read Frank Keating's glorious article in the *Guardian* (10 August) on Basil D'Oliveira, and remind himself that South Africa refused to play against England unless the selectors fielded an all-white team.

The *Observer* says that 'many' cricketers have already agreed to go on this racialist jaunt. I'm glad Mike Brearley has made it clear that he will not go. He has a good reputation on these matters, and a strong word or two from him condemning the tour should work wonders.

☐ Thursday, 16 August. 9.32 a.m. 'Bring forth male children only.' For a crazy moment I thought that the nursing sister at the Royal Free Hospital was going to quote *Macbeth* at me. Instead, she said: 'It's a boy. Big and beautiful.' Close examination of the bundle she carried showed that both adjectives were singularly inappropriate.

For the next few days I reflect on the inequality of childbirth. Father goes out in the open air, elated, to ring friends and family with the good news and to bask in congratulations for his stupendous non-achievement. Mother lies in hospital bruised and battered and, in Rose's case, sick with anaesthetic. Sixteen hours of mighty contractions have pushed the baby nowhere. And in the end they have to cut him out.

How do women go on doing it? Stumbling into the 'fathers' room' in the middle of the night, I meet a Welshman whose wife has just been admitted. He is cheerful and friendly; I am not. The following day, I meet him again, outside the hospital. 'It was terrible', he answers my inquiry. 'All right now of course, but *terrible*.' We walk together comparing the deep forceps delivery with the Caesarian section.

After visiting hours, I seek him out and find him kissing his wife goodbye. How remarkable it is, I mutter, that any woman ever agrees to have a baby. 'What do you mean?' she replies, sharply. 'The moment I took that baby on my tummy, I wanted to start all over again!' The female of the species is more hardy than the male.

Anyway, if anyone is interested (which seems unlikely) the 'big and beautiful boy' is called Tom. After Tom Paine, Tom Wooler. and Tom Mann. Nothing to do with Tom Jackson or Tom Jones. And most emphatically nothing to do with Tom Denning.

☐ Friday, 17 August. Returning home from the hospital, and reaching, as though for a fix, for my NS, I am rather surprised to find myself described as an abortionist. This response to a little piece I wrote a month ago against the Corrie Abortion Bill is written not by some Tory hack but by H. C. Mullin, a lorry driver, whose marvellous letter to the NS last January was the best thing published anywhere about the lorry drivers' strike. I very much hope H. C. Mullin does not give up reading the NS just because he disagrees with me about abortion. And I would ask him fraternally to consider this. The Corrie Bill, which, presumably, he supports (and what other Tories get his support?) is an abortionists' charter. Its chief effect would be to ensure that abortions which are now done legally, freely and safely by qualified doctors will be done by unqualified quacks for profit.

Paul Foot

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ The club, with its restaurant and cocktail bar in the grounds of Drayton House, Oving, has been built around the old flint walls and wooden beams of a massive barn. A circular dance floor with sophisticated lighting used to be part of a field. Orion, the firm running the disco, says it has the lot – even a library. 'We don't actually expect people to read the books, but it is a nice area where they can go with their wives or girlfriends,' they said. – *Brighton Evening Argus* (G.M. Moger).

☐ The new Lady of Hickstead today told how she met millionaire show jumper Douglas Bunn – as she wore a beach bikini and tweed skirt and squirted a soda siphon. Lorna Kirk, a 22 year-old nurse, said: 'It's a fairy-tale romance – there's no other way to describe it.' – *Evening News* (Leon Drucker)

☐ Opened six months ago near King's Cross, it is the only private clinic in Britain for the diagnosis and treatment of venereal disease. 'Without exception they are jolly nice people,' the doctor in charge said. 'These are thoroughly decent men and women, responsible citizens and mostly happily married. Many become infected in the Far East, where it can be an insult to turn down your host's offer of a woman.' – *Daily Telegraph* (Michael White)

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LETTERS to the EDITOR

In defence of Post Office consumers

From Dora Russell

I have just read in a column and a half in your issue of 3 August the Post Office engineers' statement of their case. They want telecommunications to remain in government hands since this affords them protection against competition from Italy, Japan and the United States. They would not, however, be averse to the hiving off of their humbler and less lucrative partner the postal service. Rich and expanding, they see advantages in dissociating themselves economically from a poor relation whose despised services would inevitably continue to deteriorate – the more so since consumers would consequently be driven to increasing use of the phone, if they could afford it.

I doubt if there is any consumer of either of these services today who is not indignant at their disregard of the needs and convenience of the public whom they profess to serve.

In my area today we have one daily delivery by car. This has saved the cost of the army of postmen on bikes, as well as affording protection against bad weather. Yet our local post office has been abolished as needless expense, though the stipend offered to subpostmen or women is miserable.

So we buy our stamps from the grocer, but only 7p or 9p. Pensioners cannot walk to the nearest existing post office; if they go by bus it will cost anything up to £1 return and mean an absence of five hours from home. To post anything too large for a narrow post box this journey is inevitable.

Consumers' complaints are met by the excuse of the immense increase in the volume of work. Yet we learn of thousands of vacancies in the service that remain unfilled because £60 a week, which involves a six-day instead of a five-day week, and 'unsocial hours', is unacceptable. A union official on television looks with envy on the German postal workers' £100 a week. Plenty of people, especially women, within the home and out of it, work very 'unsocial' hours for less reward.

The postal services, national and international, were once looked on as a shining example of public organisation and public concern for human communications. It was the pride of all who served them that 'the mails should go through'. That people should be able to speak and write to one another at reasonable cost is far more important than technical gadgetry and riches. Such was the ideal of the original 'penny post'. And even businessmen expect to 'gain on the swings what they lose on the roundabouts'. So why cannot telecommunications help out its vitally important poorer partner?

Carn Voel, Porthcurno, Nr Penzance

From George Forsyth, formerly assistant secretary, telecomms division, Union of Post Office Workers

David Norman, general treasurer of the POEU, claims that his union's recently concluded job security agreement marks a milestone in British industrial relations history (Letters 3 August). This is a gross distortion of Post Office history. Let me tell him why.

The Union of Post Office Workers concluded a successful Telephone and Telegraph Agreement *in 1948* which guaranteed job security and which has stood the test of time. Furthermore that agreement, as compared with the current POEU agreement, was concluded against the background of a *contracting* service not an *expanding* one. But perhaps Mr Norman wasn't around at that time.

He claims that the 'quality of service' of the British telephone service stands up by comparison with most European countries. This is not borne out by fact. If telephone subscribers can arrange for their telephone to go out of order between, say, 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. then they might get service from an engineer. If the Fault Repair Service had been controlled by telephonists, as desired by the Post Office and the UPW some years ago, then telephone subscribers would get a highly-efficient 24 hour service.

If Mr Norman believes that the splitting of the postal and telecommunications services of the Post Office will be beneficial to the telephone-using public, then he is living in cloud cuckoo land. What will take place will be further empire building, something that has been going on in the telecommunications business of the Post Office for the past 15 years. There will be even more chiefs than Indians and greatly increased telephone bills.

66 Rougement Avenue, Morden, Surrey

Cromwell's value

From Professor Ivan Roots

Daphne Phillips's letter (20 July) about Oliver Cromwell is both repulsive and wrong. I would have thought that every schoolgirl knew that Cromwell was not a military dictator, did not rule for as many as 11 years, and as Protector did hold two Parliamentary elections. Moreover, as Christopher Hill and a host of other historians have shown, there was much more to puritanism than 'The spirit of capitalism'. Cromwell and his astonishingly wide range of associates may not have been democrats – though some were – but much of what they said and did was valuable and often very relevant to the problems and conflicts of the present day.

University of Exeter

Gossip and hearsay

From Keith Dugmore

I hope that Duncan Campbell felt at least a twinge of embarrassment when writing (NS 10 August) that 'police regularly record gossip, hearsay and unsubstantiated information'. Hasn't the NEW STATESMAN itself – particularly Paul Foot – already travelled far down this slippery slope during the past year? I would rather see more well-researched articles (for example Peter Kellner on opinion poll evidence of what Labour voters really think) than have my prejudices confirmed, be offered simplistic solutions to real problems or see sitting targets repeatedly attacked.

8 Hugh Street, London SW1

How fair rewards turn authors into soap

From Simon Dally

As a humble publishing editor who has yet to master fully the art of 'ripping off' 'grateful' and 'innocent' authors over 'gentlemanly lunches in Charlotte Street', I hope you will allow me to comment on David Caute's quite excellent public relations exercise on behalf of Hamish Hamilton and the Writers' Guild (NS 27 July).

If Mr Caute invites me – or any other publishing house – to commission a book from him on the terms of the Guild agreement he is perfectly at liberty to do so. He will surely permit us, however, to accept or refuse the book according to whether or not we believe the terms to be acceptable. Many books are exciting enough for a good publisher to offer far more favourable terms than the Writers' Guild agreement. But to expect us to sign a document agreeing to publish everyone else's books on the same terms that he and the Guild want is plain arrogance. One of the more interesting features of publishing, both historically and today, is the sheer scope, individuality and variety of books and their authors. Some write only for large sums of money (only blockheads didn't according to Dr Johnson), others because they have a strong desire to say something, others (though it may surprise Mr Caute) because they actually *like* their publishers and (in several cases) draw their ideas from them. To impose a uniform agreement would not only help reduce the publishing of books to the same talent that markets bars of soap (which he deplores), it would also prevent the publication of many books (for example heavily illustrated works requiring a massive investment from the publisher in overheads and copyright fees) – with the consequence that far fewer authors would see their work published. This is what prevents us signing the Guild agreement: it has nothing to do with fears of back-door trade unionism.

I will not elaborate on the several errors of fact and emphasis in Mr Caute's article beyond saying that if he really believes publishers spend their time trying to extract advances paid for books they commissioned but don't want to publish he might like to look at the figures written off in advances for commissioned books where the author has failed even to put pen to paper!

Finally may I congratulate you, sir, on your tasteful drawing of David Caute's hero, Christopher Sinclair-Stevenson? I find drawings are so much more interesting than those photographs you now print in the front half (are they for the subscribers who can't read, by the way?). What a pity, though, that your artist failed to portray that fine man in the precise act of making his 'enlightened leap into the twentieth century' to quote David Caute's immortal words. Still, he *(the artist was in fact a woman – Ed)* caught the 'conspicuous virtue' all right.

Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 91 Clapham High Street, London SW4

Is Israel a democracy?

From Terence Prittie

Ian Black (NS 27 July) produces one strange thought. He writes that angry Israeli authorities 'were nevertheless virtually powerless' to prevent a pro-Palestinian three-day meeting earlier last month in East Jerusalem.

'Virtually powerless'?! Surely, the Israelis have been accused, time after time, of being brutal oppressors in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, you name it. And yet they were 'powerless' to ban a mere meeting, which deeply annoyed them!

Could we have more honest reporting of what really happens? The Israelis believe in democratic freedoms. They allow the speeches of the PLO terrorist leader Arafat to be printed in full Arab-language newspapers. The Israeli authorities were not 'virtually powerless' to prevent the three-day meeting in East Jerusalem. They could have stopped it at any time.

Unconsciously, unwittingly, Ian Black has explained that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. This does not seem to have been his purpose.

Britain & Israel, 126-134 Baker Street, London W1.

Welsh Wales

From Meurig Parri

Maybe you think we're all thick like the Irish, or too busy slaving like niggers to read your Ruskie magazine, but you're out of your tiny Chinese minds if you think we're going to sit as quiet as wog coolies while like snidy dagoes you slip such phrases as 'a government which welshes' (NS 10 August) into your political comment.

Not good enough. Ten out of ten for the meaning but a big racialist (black?) mark for the way you put it.

16 Heol Glanmor, Tir Uchel, Swansea, Wales

Considerable freedom

From Bernard Dixon, editor of New Scientist

Thank you for publishing the letter (NS 17 August) from Paul Barker and I about the editorial freedom of *New Scientist* and *New Society*. But it was disingenuous of you to follow it with Francis Wheen's comment about my leader earlier this year on the question of our acceptance or rejection of advertising matter. I went out of my way in that leader to point out that the question at issue was quite separate from editorial policy – in which we have always enjoyed considerable freedom. I can only assume now that your motives here are entirely mischievous.

Stamford Street, London SE1

NEW STATESMAN INDEX
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FIRST PERSON
Arthur Marshall

Men's sauna

There are, as is obvious, enormous advantages connected with being able to live in the depths of the country, and I do not only speak scenically and gastronomically (there's nothing like a Devonian new-laid egg and my neighbour's free-range chickens, pleasingly dotty-looking birds, are so joyously free-range that they consider themselves to be welcome everywhere, even in church, and they occasionally deposit a speckled and oval tribute among my dahlias while passing through on their way to Matins). Remoteness provides a protection against many of Life's problems and against the difficulties that agitate large communities and tear the world apart, and prominent among the problems that in no way touch us here at Appleton is that of nude bathing.

Appleton, though a real feast for the eyes and chock-a-block with valuable activity (a Jumble Sale is 'on' at the village hall as I write) is, quite frankly, no centre for bathing, draped or otherwise. Swiftly-moving and icy-cold streams from Dartmoor dash through it on their way down to the Teign river in the valley below. Here and there a small and muddy pond forms, paddled in in hot weather by cows and sipped at by sheep. This is not bathing country, apart from the great local blessing of the Bultitudes' spacious pool, so thoughtfully made available to all and sundry throughout the year. Elegant Giles and Bunty lead the revels before, during and after the dip, with 'Who's for a noggin?' from Giles at one end of the *piscine*, a cheery invitation echoed by 'How's about a snifter?' from Bunty at the other. How extraordinarily kind and generous such merry extroverts almost always are.

Nobody would dream of assaulting the Bultitude pool with no clothes on. Visitors not expecting to plunge are catered for in the changing-rooms where Giles supplies a row of what he refers to as 'spare bum-bags'. I myself make use in their pool of my own cherished pair of swimming-trunks which I purchased many years ago now in, of course, the Army & Navy Stores in London's Victoria Street. They were in a tasteful black and white design, now faded to grey, and they have taken with me to the waters in a wide variety of places. Together we have enjoyed Ibiza (so splendid for schnorkeling), the Gulf of Mexico (in company with about a million pelicans), a private pool in Wisconsin (shared with mosquitoes and chipmunks), Barbados (can there be more marvellous bathing anywhere in the world?), and year after happy year at Amalfi (just round the corner from Naples and on the Gulf of Salerno). My sturdy and tremendously hard-wearing trunks have a sort of white inner lining fashioned from some soft and rather elastic material which has stood splendidly up to all the calls made upon it. And it gives me a tremendous advantage over other swimmers. If, when ready for the briny, I choose to enter the water by holding my nose and then jumping in off a rock (a diving board would be rather too showy and modesty forbids it), the lining fills, as I zoom downwards, with air and provides me with my own personal flotation chambers, a bodily feature which, as delightful David Attenborough kept on pointing out in that splendid TV series, few aquatic animals can afford to be without. If I dive in, the same thing occurs and a comforting belt of air held captive round my middle ensures a really quite unusual buoyancy. Perched up in the water is what I am and able to peer about and drink in the other bathers. Incidentally, I like to think of my dive as being of the swallow variety but I have learnt, after performing it, to stay under water for as long as possible (not easy, with my flotations). By the time I surface, those who were sunbathing near me at the moment of impact have usually stopped swearing and dabbing at themselves with towels, and the most turbulent of the waves caused by my splash have subsided.

In none of the resorts that I have mentioned above have I ever seen a suggestion of nude bathing, that subject that is currently exercising so many keen minds in modish centres along our south coast where, so icy and appalling is the condition of the English Channel water (for four years I bathed regularly in the Solent and so I know what I am talking about), that I would have thought that it was a case of the more clothes the better. Some newspapers have even had leading articles upon the matter and, to demonstrate how jolly their approach is, have headed them 'Strip Ahoy!' Well, if people wish to bathe as God, if on rather an off day, made them, why on earth shouldn't they? I can see no moral objection, though aesthetic ones are two a penny. As everybody must know by now, the more clothes that are removed from the average human body, the less appetising it becomes as a spectacle. The final nude state is, in most cases, very far from pleasing to the eye. So much that shouldn't really wobble, wobbles. As Sir Robert Helpmann so wisely said when discussing the pros and cons of ballet performed in the nude, 'not everything stops when the music stops'.

Nudity and countless other bodily matters are fully examined in the *Encyclopaedia of Natural Health and Healing* (Kaye & Ward, £6.25), the work of Mr Harvey Day, born in Bangladesh, interested 'in yoga and the occult' and at one point rather surprisingly an engineer with the Eastern Bengal Railway before settling for dietetics, health and cookery. His book is a richly stuffed bran-tub of widely assorted information, though he begs readers (as indeed and most emphatically do I) to 'consult with their physician' before bringing any of the suggested remedies and specifics into play. Especially striking are the claims that he makes for the common or garden (indeed) stinging nettles. Not a particle of them need be wasted. Boil the top four inches and hey presto, a spinach-substitute is to hand. Drain off the water and use it as stock (good for slimmers). Nettle poultices relieve pain. Boiled nettle water puts paid to worms (species not stated). Make a fragrant tea from nettle roots and say farewell to haemorrhage of the, pardon me, urinary organs. Nettle water is A1 as a hair tonic, restoring its natural colour and curing dandruff (boil the leaves in vinegar and give that scalp a real sousing). Pressed nettle juice is tip-top for constipation. Nettle seeds, steeped in wine, are death to ague. A bunch of nettles hung up in the larder will discourage flies. In 1917, the wily Hun, running short of basics, made socks, greatcoats and tarpaulins from nettles. Personally, I'm going out into the orchard this very moment to gather a great armful of the lovely things. Does one *knit* them to make socks? Ouch!

Oddities abound. There was the sad case of Basil Brown, with a PhD in chemistry, who in 1974 and in ten days swallowed carrot juice containing 70 million units of vitamin A because he thought it would be good for him. He turned bright yellow and passed rapidly away from vitamin poisoning. Hearing that wheat germ and honey improve sexual performances, the inscrutable Japanese bought up honey in such vast quantities that they sent the price up sky-high, though to what extent their home lives were improved is not stated. I am glad to say that Mr Hay speaks up warmly for the virtues of alcohol ('It soothes the anxious mind and is an aid to sociability' – as good an excuse as any). Bananas are a mild laxative. Cleopatra often took 69 (odd number to choose) asses' milk baths a day. Ivan the Terrible was cured of gout by bee stings, which also improved the arthritis of the above-mentioned R. Helpmann ('Now I can dance for hours and hours'). If pushed for an aperient, why not fall back on the humble beetroot? If you were to ban white sugar altogether and halve the amount of salt eaten, many diseases would disappear.

A final tip, and please don't blame me if it doesn't work, though I can hardly think that any damage to the system will result. It is a cure that has been widely scoffed at but Mr Hay was, appropriately enough, cured of hay fever (a martyr to it for 25 years) by chewing honeycomb. But not, as the song has it, 'when the bee's at home'.

Roger Woddis

Ship of state

The Chancellor, Sir Geoffrey Howe, said in an interview in the Wall Street Journal *that the British economy is 'off course'.*

The outlook, I fear,
Is appallingly bad:
The engine is failing,
The captain is mad.
We've long lost our bearings,
We're drifting off course;
We'd signal for help,
But we never learnt Morse.

The compass is broken,
The wheel is askew,
We'll know where we're bound
If we ever heave to.
The crew is a rabble
Of mutinous dogs,
And we'd write it all down
If we understood logs.

The first mate's half-crazed
With a terrible tic,
The doctor is drunk
And the engineer's sick.
We're listing to starboard,
The radio's dead,
So let her go sideways –
And full steam ahead!

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

Bruce Page

The Gunner's Story

The Literature of War by ANDREW RUTHERFORD *Macmillan* £8.95
Mars on Trial by CHESTER W. OBUCHOWSKI *Studia Humanitatis, Madrid*
From Our Special Correspondent by ROBERT WILKINSON-LATHAM *Hodder & Stoughton* £8.95

Professor Rutherford might be accused of overblowing his title. *The Literature of War* sounds rather more comprehensive than a batch of well-made essays concerning Kipling, Lawrence of Arabia, Siegfried Sassoon (plus a few comrades), Evelyn Waugh and John Le Carré. Nothing for Homer, Caesar or Machiavelli, for *The Song of Roland* or *War and Peace*? Given only incidental put-downs for Thucydides and *Catch-22*, it would be too much to expect anything for the memoirs of Djilas or Guevara. As often, the sub-title is more serviceable, revealing that what's offered is *Five Studies in Heroic Virtue*, chiefly as displayed or recorded by the middle-classes of the British Isles. (One wouldn't quibble, except that there's a powerful case for avoiding ethnocentric bias when dealing with warfare.)

Professor Rutherford is a committed critic: he feels that 'current intellectual opinion' has been giving heroic virtue a bad time, and that the balance needs redressing. As he manages to whistle up both Ruskin and Orwell in support, socialists anyway can scarcely afford to dismiss him out of hand: he is neither a reactionary nor a philistine. For all his – essentially conservative – commitment, he cares for his subjects as writers, rather than spokespeople. And he perceives that in a century which has some especially fearsome obscenities on record – to his eye, there is no difference between the Americans at My Lai and the Waffen SS – the heroic virtues require a defence more substantial than the cool good manners which he admired in the mess of the Seaforth Highlanders.

What Rutherford dislikes is a situation in which (as he suspects) the intelligent English reader is trained to the belief that Falstaff's flight from 'such a grinning honour as Sir Walter hath' is not only sympathetic, but admirable: that Prince Hal and his heroics are always contemptible, as well as hair-raising. And of course he touches on a serious matter here, especially when he points out that if you banish the hero from polite literature you will find you have banished virtue from popular literature. The decline of Prince Hal is correlated with the rise of James Bond (properly identified by Rutherford as a State assassin, and a thoroughly nasty piece of work). The danger of this situation Rutherford picks up from Orwell, who observed that, 'when it comes to the pinch', human beings remain heroic, or enough of them do: 'the high sentiments' always win in the end, the battleships go down with their guns firing and the revolutionaries keep their mouths shut in the torture-chamber. No amount of satire, mockery or denunciation appears to excise these characteristics, nor have we made much progress in understanding them. Behavioural psychology, certainly, has little useful to offer. Literature remains our principal resource.

The problem about Prince Hal is not that he is a plain criminal brute like Bond or the First Murderer – requiring only to be pitied, restrained or abhorred, according to circumstance – but that he is an intricate, highly-civilised creature, whose emotions explode, not very predictably, at the touch of abstract ideas like honour, loyalty or compassion. And once the explosion has occurred, his intellectual and moral energies make him immensely more daunting as an organiser of destruction – a 'leader of men' – than any mere assassin. It is no help to say that Shakespeare's character

doesn't resemble the historical Henry V (the evidence is anyway pretty unclear). We have ample signs from our own time of the paradox which Shakespeare was exploring: namely, that brutality and heroic lethality are far from being simple correlates; may indeed, disturbingly, be inversely related.

Here is a story told by a man whom I know to have survived too many European implausibilities to need to invent any (and which can be amplified by much other evidence from the years 1939-45). He was a gunner in an RAF bomber, attacking a German city at a time when flak and night-fighters still denied to bomber crews any rational expectation of living into peacetime. 'Creep-back' was a plague to the RAF planners. Each raid was meant to concentrate falling explosive around one aiming-point, in order to secure the optimum immolation of German civilians. The Germans would rapidly divine this point, and saturate the surrounding air with fire. 'Creep-back' occurred when some bomb-aimers flinched and released early, diluting the intended concentration.

The bomb-aimer and pilot of this particular crew – as habitually – went all the way in. But on turning away they found that one heavy bomb was 'hung up'. This was deadly, in that to try to land with a fused bomb was suicidal, and the mere weight of the thing detracted from the prospects of evading fighter-attack. My witness, whose entire family had been slaughtered by the Nazis, was startled to hear on the inter-com his captain, navigator and bomb-aimer devising a plan – which they carried through – for finding a piece of open country before disposing of the bomb. These were people far too intelligent not to know the nature of the havoc they wrought routinely on targeted cities. But that was justified by abstractions similar to those which provided the moral energy capable of taking volunteers through all the tedious complexities and hideous dangers of aircrew service (there cannot have been much headlong excitement about heavy bombers). And even at the height of the slaughter there remained people in whom those abstractions retained such force as to push them further into danger in order to avoid (as they saw it) gratuitous murder.

This does not make the slaughter any less terrible. But it adds formidably to the problem of comprehending its moral roots sufficiently well to circumvent another, and terminal, recurrence. War, obviously, did not cease in 1945. It merely abandoned, for the time being, its European homeland, and anyone who imagines the beast has no more designs on us pays insufficient attention to the newspapers. Professor Rutherford's valuable conviction is that it is one of the occupations of literature to investigate the moral and emotional paradoxes which are central to the business of war. And, as he implies, we are not well-served by criticism which has scarcely got past the point that Wilfred Owen was better informed than Rupert Brooke, or which merely makes indiscriminate lists of writers who have mentioned the subject. Regrettably, Chester Obuchowski's *Mars on Trial*, promising to introduce us to French literature's dealings with modern warfare, is the second error bodied forth: Pierre Clostermann was a gallant fighter-pilot (all right, 'winged warrior' if you must) but that does not make him a writer to be discussed alongside Romain Rolland, and to the exclusion of Saint-Exupéry.

Rutherford is scarcely so unsubtle, but one may doubt whether his sense of literary proportion quite matches the scope of his ambitions. The country under examination is the awful one explored by Isaac Rosenberg,

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Owen, Keith Douglas, Alun Lewis (all of whom, in the nature of things, went too far, sending back only fragments for us to interpret). Good craftsmen like Waugh and Le Carré cannot usefully be treated as major participants here, whatever the value of their inquiries elsewhere – and the operations of T.E. Lawrence, a sort of literary Van Meegeren, are quite beside the point.

Kipling, of course, can go more or less anywhere he wishes, like a ghost slipping in and out of any convenient body. Physically, Kipling was never closer to battle than most good war-correspondents. But while they came back with sadly unfocused pictures – Mr Wilkinson-Latham, following dutifully after Phillip Knightley's *The First Casualty*, shows once again the absurdity of the Victorian image of war – Kipling was able to investigate terrors and shames which were scarcely flushed out again till 'the debunking war-books of the 1920s' (Orwell's words again). But for all his expertise as a one-time editor of Kipling, I think Rutherford misapprehends the one complete genius to whom he gives undivided attention. He finds, for instance, 'a recurrent problem in Kipling's presentation of soldier-heroes', and 'in too many of his portraits we see an abandonment of the centuries-old European attempt to combine courage and military skill with culture, intelligence and sensitivity.' This is like lecturing a super-sensitive radar set because it illuminates hazards which otherwise wouldn't yet be visible. As Rutherford concedes, the collapse of the 'Renaissance synthesis' was an historical failure which wasn't Kipling's fault. The point about Kipling was that he could delineate such movements while they were still nascent, and before Kipling or anyone else could understand them.

It is when he deals, even if patchily, with some of the 1914-18 writers that Rutherford comes to the heart of the matter. He perceives – though without sufficiently analysing – what biographical inquiry has only lately made inescapably clear: which is that there was no simple dichotomy between the poetic virtues and the military virtues (if virtues the latter be).

When declining to include Owen in the *Oxford Book of English Verse* on the notorious grounds that 'passive suffering is not a theme for poetry', Yeats gave better evidence than even Kipling did for the proposition that a great poet's judgments may be worth no more than tuppence. There is a lot more to Owen than 'passive suffering', such as the state when

> . . . power was on us as we slashed bones bare
> Not to feel sickness or remorse of murder

or Lieutenant Owen seizing a German machine gun, turning it around and (from his MC citation) 'inflicting considerable losses on the enemy'. Owen actually misrepresented that incident in his letters, saying that he had only shot one man, with his revolver.

The war-poets were easy to misunderstand: a talent which generally implies endless appetite for experience militates against survival, so that the best were least likely to bequeath a well-manicured *oeuvre*. (Why did Rosenberg trot away on the last volunteer mission, leaving a gap which 62 years later still expands? The answer is that he wouldn't have been Rosenberg if he hadn't.) So they were read instead as passive neurotics, which is an absurdity Rutherford brushes against, but fails to shatter, when he cites the fantastic philistinism of John Terraine – who has made a historical career out of trying to suggest that the generals who presided over the demolition of a whole British generation were something more respectable than idiots. Very few of the chaps in the war, says Terraine, were real upset. Why,

> if even a substantial number had been permanently in the condition of nerves so clearly expressed by, say, the poems of Wilfred Owen or Sassoon, it is quite clear that the daily round *could not* have gone on. The inescapable, wonderful fact is that it did . . .

Let us hear from a prosaic voice: that of General John Monash, who actually cracked the Western Front which so sorely baffled Douglas Haig and his colleagues – procuring in the end the 1918 Amiens breakthrough and the sudden, amazing collapse of the outnumbered Germans. Monash wrote that, as far as he was concerned, 'From the far-off days of 1914, when the first call came, until the last shot was fired, every day was filled with horror, loathing and distress.'

Nervy sort of chap, clearly. (What can you expect? Jewish . . . colonial, amateur really. Some kind of engineer. Plays music.) The inescapable, terrible fact is that the poets and the generals – those generals not engaged in butchering their own side – so far from being contradictions of each other, were merely separate exponents of the same human virtues of sensitivity and courage, and it was in spite of, or because of, that fact that the whole lunatic business went on at all. Only a buffoon thinks we are very much safer today, and Andrew Rutherford's book reminds us that we have very much left to learn.

Tom Paulin

Public Faces

Cunninghame Graham: A Critical Biography by CEDRIC WATTS and LAURENCE DAVIES *Cambridge* £12.50

Beattock for Moffat and the Best of R. B. Cunninghame Graham *Paul Harris* £4.95

'Your too short visit has been a god-send,' Conrad wrote to Cunninghame Graham. 'You've left me believing once more in the reality of things.' By this Conrad didn't mean that the friend he so deeply loved had restored his faith in ordinary life, but that Cunninghame Graham's extraordinary personality had visited him like an inspiration, an intensely imaginative fiction. The ageing Conrad always cheered up, trimmed his moustache and appeared more youthful whenever one of Graham's frequent visits was announced, and in 'a tone of tragic and almost passionate pathos' he once said to Arthur Symons: 'Could you conceive for a moment that I could go on existing if Cunninghame Graham were to die?' Graham's existence so sustained and nourished Conrad's imagination that he seems to belong in a pure fiction – in the spectacular absurdity of some imaginary South American republic, rather than the diligent pages of a biography.

Shaw made him Savaroff in *Arms and the*

new from Manchester

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THE MIDDLE EASTERN STATES AND THE LAW OF THE SEA
Ali A El-Hakim The wide-ranging nature of this book should guarantee its interest to students and scholars in international law, government and international officials, foreign ministries and diplomats, and multi-national and national oil companies. *£16.50*
October illustrated.

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY PRESS Oxford Road Manchester M13 9PL

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Man, and in his preface to *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, he acknowledges Graham's help with the Moorish background, adding, 'I have not made him the hero of my play, because so incredible a personage must have destroyed its likelihood'. He was a kind of existential dandy whose greatest achievement, Chesterton said, 'was the adventure of being Cunninghame Graham'. And though he appeared to have invented himself he did manage to get born in Cadogan Place in 1852. He was a Scottish aristocrat who was also 'a Spanish hidalgo'. He lived among the gauchos in South America, returned to England and became a radical MP, eloped with a Chilean girl, was jailed for his part in the Bloody Sunday demonstration of 1887, and became a writer and journalist whose talent was admired by Shaw, Conrad, Ford and Edward Garnett. Engels thought he was 'a nice fellow, but always in want of a manager'; Beatrice Webb called him a *poseur*; and many people compared him to Don Quixote – whom he modelled for William Strang. He campaigned for all kinds of political causes and when he died in 1936 Muggeridge dismissed him as a trendy radical who 'had only to know a country half an hour to have a burning sense of the wrongs under which it laboured, and to set about ventilating them'.

That he wasn't a lightweight political aesthete and egotist is shown, curiously, by his attitude to Ireland – a hard test of anyone's judgment. Cunninghame Graham supported Home Rule and knew Parnell (in the lobbies they talked conspiratorially about horses), and at the height of the O'Shea case he defended Parnell and 'took care to shake his hand before all the House'. After Parnell's death he paid him a moving tribute in the Commons, and he was the only British MP to attend his funeral. And yet he regretted Parnell's attitude to labour questions (Parnell hated trade unions) and was suspicious of Parnellism, which he defined as 'an excessive desire of the chieftains to lead and the masses to be led'. Speaking in Glasgow with James Larkin, he put Socialism before Irish Nationalism, arguing that 'man must have a little bread, as well as sunbursts and green flags and Brian Boru and the Celtic movements'. His view of Irish politics was sane and flexible, and it shows that he wasn't swayed – as commentators in this country are to this day – by a sentimental myth of Ireland.

Unfortunately, Cedric Watts and Laurence Davies have been so scrupulous in their researches that they avoid interpreting his personality and reduce his life to a spectacular series of travels and good causes. They make him into an entirely public figure and then wonder glumly if 'an outside was all he had'. Describing his political opinions in the 1930s, they suddenly remember that his wife, Gabriela, died in a French hotel a quarter of a century earlier. They mount a brisk retrospective operation, but it's rather as if Cunninghame Graham was much too busy to notice his bereavement. Their mistake is to neglect those fascinations which lie at the heart of all biography – private tenderness, disappointment and dirty secrets. Watts and Davies fail to understand that behind the facts of any life there is a free mysterious spirit that can never be reached by a numb sentence like: 'Graham mourned his wife deeply; but time, chance and human biology provided the customary solvents of grief.' And if Graham was simply a Conradian figure – all adventurous surface and no psychology – then this means that he subverts his biography just as he would have destroyed *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* if Shaw had made him its hero. And towards the end his biographers make themselves wistfully and voluntarily redundant: his inner character remains 'elusive' they say. But this is because they don't really want to analyse his private character, his relationship with his wife and with Mrs Dummett, who must be what is meant by 'time, chance and human biology'. However, they write well about his friendship with Conrad, and they quote excellently from his writings – Graham was a brilliant travel writer who had a marvellous sympathy with all kinds of different cultures.

This is shown most vividly in his fine story, 'A Hegira', which describes the escape of a group of Apaches in Mexico. As they journey across a 'waste of whitish alkali', the Apaches become fugitive ghosts, symbols of an imagination which white civilisation must destroy. Graham creates them through a series of glimpses – they are mysterious, instinctive, hunted and sadly human – and his narrator sees beyond the nervous rumours that follow their trail across the desert:

> I followed their every step, saw them crouched round their little fire, roasting the roots of wild mescal; marked them upon the march in single file, their eyes fixed on the plain, watchful and silent as they were phantoms gliding to the north.

At the end they are massacred by a Texan – Graham hated American imperialism and uniformity, just as Conrad did.

The other stories in this hastily assembled selection echo Crane, Maupassant and, inevitably, Conrad. There is some fey Celtic mysticism and sloppy romanticism – 'Dark rose the crenellated walls' – but there is enough evidence of Graham's literary talent to make one wish for a more ample anthology of his work. He manages somehow to be both substantial and insubstantial, a noble idealist who never sought power and authority and who exists today as the friend of the novelist whose existence he once imaginatively guaranteed, like a Berkeleyan eye.

Paul Foot

The Duellists

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: His Revolutionary Life, Mind and Works by EDWARD HYAMS
John Murray £10

Before reading this hagiography of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, I was uneasy and suspicious about him. Now my mind is made up. I dislike him very much indeed.

When, as a young printer, Proudhon walked to Paris from his home in the Jura in 1838, he noticed at once that something was very wrong with the way human beings managed their affairs. The two chief defects in society, he divined, were inequality and the control of society by people who owned property. He set himself to fight 'a duel to the death' against both.

In the summer of 1844 he met Karl Marx who had dedicated himself to the same sort of duel. What sort of society, they asked each other, should replace the one founded on inequality and poverty? Proudhon was for 'no more government'. There was, he thought, 'an absolute incompatibility between the principles of central authority and local initiative'. He was against any political democracy which 'retains the governmental principle' for 'such a democracy is doomed to fall under the authoritarian heel'.

It followed that Proudhon's duel against property was very much a one-man fight. He shut out any suggestion of organisation or party or trade union, for these too were doomed to fall under the authoritarian heel. So was all political action, especially revolutionary action. He wrote to Marx: 'We ought not to put forward revolutionary action as the means of social reform.'

This insistence that ideas should precede and supersede action pushed Proudhon to the right even of the radical parliamentarians of the day. In place of revolution, he wanted, as he wrote, to 'burn property on a slow fire'. The workers, he urged, should join 'economic associations' like mutualist banks and building societies which 'would cause property to wither'. Capitalism, with all its horrors and cruelties, would be enticed or sliced out of existence. In essence, Proudhon's economic policies, which he urged the workers to act upon spontaneously, were, as Edward Hyams rightly describes them, 'Keynesianism before Keynes'.

Karl Marx admired a lot of the young Proudhon's polemic against inequality. But when Proudhon set down his views at length in *The Philosophy of Poverty*, Marx replied angrily with *The Poverty of Philosophy*. This was written before Marx had learned (perhaps from Engels) how to popularise his writing style. It is long, boring and very difficult to understand. But its purpose is clear from the dedication: 'Mr Proudhon's book is not just a treatise on political economy . . . it is a bible. Mysteries, secrets wrested from the bosom of God, revelations – it lacks nothing.' Marx's book is an attack on the *vagueness* of Proudhon's formulas which lead people to think of revolution but to shrink from making it.

If inequality can be explained simply as an unfortunate breach in Proudhon's 'natural law of constituted value' (by which the value of the product *should* – by some divine edict – return to the worker) then assuredly it can be set aside by individual example, or squeezed out by cooperative banks. But if it is the result of a relentless process of exploitation, then it will be pursued with increasing vigour by the exploiters and can only be ended by the most disciplined organisation and the most ferocious turmoil. In a mercifully clear passage towards the end, Marx summed up:

> The economists want the workers to remain in society as it is constituted and as it has been signed and sealed by them in their manuals. The [utopian] socialists want the workers to leave the old society alone, the better to be able to enter

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> the new society which they have prepared for them with so much foresight. In spite of both of them, in spite of manuals and utopias, combination has not ceased for an instant to go forward and grow with the development and growth of modern industry ... permanent combinations have been formed, *trades unions* which serve as bulwarks for the workers in their struggles with the employers.

Marx urged socialist organisation within those day-to-day trade union battles, not in the 'manuals and utopias' provided for the workers by Proudhon.

This debate was central to the contributions of both men, but Edward Hyams almost ignores it. Marx's answer to Proudhon is dismissed in less than a page. Hyams concludes: 'The essence of Marxism, as of the Christianity it succeeds, is authority.' The debate is not about authority at all, but about how best to fight a society based on inequality. And because he is an honest and expert biographer Edward Hyams cannot resist the force of Marx's case against his hero, which keeps on cropping up in Proudhon's life. In the first stage of the 1848 revolution – in February – we find Proudhon 'walking the streets ... horrified by the violence'. Edward Hyams is forced to conclude: 'Because of Proudhon's rejection and repudiation of organising his followers into a political party to take office when the time came, the necessary years of preparation had been wanting.'

Four months later, in June, still without a party and despite endless polemics against parliamentary cretinism, he was elected to the new Assembly. There he brooded and bellowed, cretin-like. When, only two weeks after his election, the unemployed masses of Paris took to the streets in earnest, Proudhon argued that the government should send in troops to put the rising down. Edward Hyams apologises for this by playing up Proudhon's belated repentance of what he called his 'imbecility' during the revolution. But the imbecility went on and on.

In October 1848, the republicans nominated Cavaignac, butcher-in-chief of the June rising, for the Presidency. The Socialists proposed their own Left candidate. Proudhon supported Cavaignac. When Louis Bonaparte was elected, Proudhon rejoiced (on the familiar, if cynical grounds that the greater the reaction in government, the greater the chance of resistance). And when Bonaparte seized total power in a coup in 1851, Proudhon, who was then in prison, wrote a pamphlet, licensed by Bonaparte's censors, which welcomed the new dictatorship. At each stage in the revolutionary history of which he was part, Proudhon found himself defending in practice the reaction to which his theory was opposed. And, as is usual in all such cases, his theory disintegrated very quickly. Reading Proudhon's last big work, his friend Alexander Herzen was

> oppressed by gloomy thoughts ... After the strong vigorous mind of a free man one seems to hear the voice of a savage greybeard dictating his will and wishing now to preserve for his children the tottering edifice that he has been undermining all his life.

In spite of all this, none of which he covers up, Edward Hyams still tries to rescue Proudhon, at least as a journalist. And Proudhon the journalist *did* have a profound effect on the French working people of his time. At one stage, his paper, *Le Peuple*, had a circulation of 40,000 a day – and when Proudhon wrote the leader this went up to 60,000. His powerful invective and suspicion of all leaders carried great weight with the Parisian workers, most of whom were employed in small workshops. His assurances that social change would simply come about without the need for all the concessions and trivia of party organisation comforted the 'proud, independent-minded artisan'. So too did his prejudices. For Proudhon was a chauvinist of the most horrible variety. He hated all foreigners, especially Jews. Above all, he urged male workers to maintain the mastery of their homes. His book *La Pornacratie* is the bible of male chauvinists. 'A woman', he wrote, 'is either a housewife or a whore.' He was vehemently opposed to all women's rights – social, electoral or sexual. He had nothing but contempt for the women who, as even De Tocqueville noticed, played so heroic a part in the 1848 risings.

Once again, all this is honestly set down and admitted by Edward Hyams. His detailed story of the disgusting manner in which Proudhon went about getting himself married ('I am taking a wife for the commodity of my poor existence') does terrible damage to his hero. But Hyams insists that these were mere flaws in an otherwise admirable character. On the contrary: patriarchy, chastity, anti-semitism and all Proudhon's other vile superstitions came quite naturally to a man who, as Herzen again detected, 'was frightened of human nature's being set free'.

There is a lot of this fear in Edward Hyams too. Again and again he betrays himself as afraid not so much of authority as of 'the mob'. 'The German plebs', he writes 'made Hitler' (though the enormous majority of the German plebs went on voting against and opposing Hitler for as long as they were allowed to do so). It is this association of mass action with dictatorship which drew Edward Hyams to Proudhon, and which inspired him to write by far the most readable and comprehensive biography of him. The book purports to outline for the modern Left a new form of 'non-authoritarian socialism'. Its effect, if successful, would be to consign radical politics to the armchair.

But it fails. For the truth is that political ideas die very quickly unless they have some relevance to the human predicament and can point to a clear road out of that predicament; unless, in Lenin's ringing phrase, they 'raise political theory to the level of practice'. And although Pierre-Joseph Proudhon won his argument with the Paris masses of his time, his ideas, for all Edward Hyams's persuasiveness, seem stale today; while those of Marx, which have been condemned to death by every succeeding generation of philosophers and economists, live on.

Kerry Schott

Crisis Points

Beyond Boom and Crash by ROBERT L. HEILBRONER *Marion Boyars* £4.95 and £1.95
Collected Economic Papers: Vol. V by JOAN ROBINSON *Blackwell* £9.95
Who Runs the Economy? by WILLIAM KEEGAN and RUPERT PENNANT-REA *Maurice Temple Smith* £8 and £3.95

The human misery and wasted resources of the current crisis are sufficient evidence that major slumps in capitalist societies cannot be avoided by good Keynesian management. Unfortunately this demise of orthodox Keynesianism has been accompanied by a revival of neoclassical and monetarist ideas which we are now all experiencing in the form of Tory economic policy. It is a disturbing example of economic policy moving from bad to worse.

One of the reasons for this turn of events in economic policy has been the lack of attention devoted to longer-term issues. Was steady growth with full employment and stable prices ever a long-term possibility in a capitalist society? Certainly Harrod, Keynes, Robinson and Kalecki did not seem to think so, but their message got lost in the actual economic success of the 1950s and 1960s. We did, at least for a time, have more or less full employment, stable prices and growth.

But past success is no consolation if you are now unemployed or almost bankrupt or can barely afford the ever-increasing price of a pint. What are the causes and consequences of this economic crisis, and what is to be done? Heilbroner's *Beyond Boom and Crash* is a racy little analysis of the crisis in the United States, many of whose symptoms are shared by Britain. Using an unusually undogmatic Marxist approach he sites the cause of the crisis in the capitalist system itself. The dynamics of private production are inherently unstable and after some time a crisis is bound to appear.

As firms grew in the Fifties and Sixties, they required more workers, machines and raw materials. This tended to drive costs up. A fully employed work force demanded higher wages and reasonable working conditions, and supply constraints generally forced the prices of machines and raw materials upward. Oil price rises triggered the 1974 crisis, but these were really just part of an already established trend of cost increases. These cost increases

The Sayings of Père Patriarche

"To act on a whim can be entertaining. To buy wine on a whim is unlikely to be so."

PÈRE PATRIARCHE
RED & WHITE VIN DE TABLE
BOTTLED IN FRANCE BY PATRIARCHE
For once, don't worry about the wine.

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were then passed on to consumers. Stocks piled up and firms cut production. At the same time expectations about the future became justifiably gloomy and virtually no new investment occurred. Private production fell.

The crisis in the Thirties quickly led to dramatic drops in the prices of raw materials, machines, finished goods and a fall in wages. The difference in the Seventies is that we now have a very big government which Heilbroner sees as the main institutional cause and transmission agent of inflation. The government maintains a sufficient level of demand to avoid a 1930s-style crash. At the same time it permits higher wage settlements through an accommodating monetary policy. These public policies are politically legitimating and necessary for democratic government, but they are also putting a halt to cost decreases which would be a prelude to the rejuvenation of capitalism. This is not to argue that the consequences of a crash are at all desirable, but that the avoidance of a crash must now somehow be staged along with a recovery if capitalism is to continue.

The likely medium-term solution to this despair and misery is more economic planning both within the corporations and the state. Exhaustible resources will continue to get more expensive as they run out and simply keeping wage costs down will not solve the capitalist's cost problems. Thus Heilbroner sees institutional changes emerging which he suggests will give the capitalist system another burst of vigour for about 25 years. This section of the argument is less convincing and it does not take much imagination to think of alternative scenarios – many of which are quite dreadful.

But we should at least try to control our own fate and not simply go along with whatever crisis and solution the capitalist economy throws up. This requires an adequate understanding of the economy which, Joan Robinson has long argued, is not provided by mainstream economics. Volume Five of her *Collected Papers* covers her more recent work, and several critical themes run consistently through it. Markets cannot be understood by assuming that each buyer and seller has perfect information and equal power. Prices in the markets for raw materials may be governed by supply and demand but in most other markets prices are set by a mark-up procedure operated by very large corporations. Furthermore, the capital machinery and equipment that exist at any time is a historical legacy of past decisions, and present decisions are in part based on this legacy.

These criticisms are very important, but perhaps the most relevant part of Joan Robinson's work is her treatment of the long-run issues of growth with both full employment and price stability. Her theory and her present experience show that in a capitalist economy achieving all these targets together is impossible. There is no reason why the chosen amount of investment will be compatible with both full employment and stable prices. The only way to achieve these ends is via planning, and what we ought to think about is how to incorporate the wishes of all of society into our planning decisions. Corporate planning as predicted by Heilbroner is most unlikely to provide economic justice to either the Third World or our own poor.

The despair of economic management without long-term planning is apparent in Britain's economic performance since the second world war. The relative decline of Britain is already well-documented and the particular contribution of Keegan and Pennant-Rea is to point out the fluctuating influences on short-term management during this period. They argue that there is a cycle of institutional influences with each administration. Early in a government's life the manifesto commitments dominate, but as things go wrong the power of the Treasury and the Bank of England increases. If economic problems continue the IMF exerts influence and as improvements occur organised labour begins to affect outcomes yet again.

This cycle of influence is quite correctly placed within an historical context of differing policy preoccupations and theoretical opinions. But one of the more intriguing things about their argument is that it flies in the face of political business cycle theory. Some economists and political theorists argue that at the end of each administration the government stimulates the economy in an attempt to win the election. Unemployment is decreased and the inflationary effects of this policy subsequently appear only after the election. The government then deflates in its first period of office and we observe a political business cycle. In fact, the evidence for the existence of a political business cycle is scant and perhaps Keegan and Pennant-Rea have unwittingly suggested a reason for this. Their study makes good reading, but it would have been more interesting if they had given more thought to why institutions behave as they do rather than being so simply descriptive.

David Pryce-Jones

Hunters and Hunted

Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939–1945 by BERNARD WASSERSTEIN *Oxford* £7.95

Initially Nazi policy was calculated to terrorise Jews into emigrating from Germany, as well as from Austria and Czechoslovakia as those countries went down the appeasement drain. Something over a third of the 913,000 Jews living in this area had in fact left by 1939. Those who had merely fled elsewhere in Europe were mainly rounded up again later, when extermination replaced emigration as the Nazi order of the day, after the Wannsee Conference of Februry 1942.

Where were the emigrants to go? 'The strange indifference' in America towards saving Jewish lives has been described by Professor Henry L. Feingold in *The Politics of Rescue* (1970); only 50,000 slipped through the quota system before the war. Now Bernard Wasserstein covers what England did in this crisis. Again, something over 50,000 Jews were accepted into the country before 1939, which prompts Dr. Wasserstein to observe that 'Britain's prewar record towards Jewish refugees was relatively generous.' There is little else in this sober and important book to comfort anyone with ordinary instincts of commonsense and decency.

Whatever public opinion might be about Jewish refugees, governments in all the democracies found ever more inventive reasons for excluding them. A good example is Roger Makins (now Lord Sherfield) of the Foreign Office, writing in 1938: 'the pitiful condition to which German Jews will be reduced will not make them desirable immigrants.' At the Evian Conference, called that same year to discuss this refugee question, every government was eager to transfer the consequences of Nazism elsewhere. Goebbels was thereby handed the argument that if the Germans did not want Jews, then neither did anyone else – a propaganda line which effectively incited the anti-semitism of Central Europe, where Jews by the million were shortly to be trapped. Criticism from abroad was liable to mitigate Nazi measures right up to 1945, and lack of it encouraged Berlin.

The countries of the British empire – Palestine excepted – were persuaded to take altogether 3,000 refugees. The prevarication of colonial governors on grounds such as diet and education matched Whitehall's. But Palestine was the crux of the matter, since Jewish refugees actually wanted to go where they would be welcomed, if only by other Jews, and by 1939 53,000 had escaped there from Greater Germany. The turning-point was reached in British policy towards Jewish refugees when the much-debated White Paper on Palestine was published, only months before the war. A further 75,000 Jews were to be admitted there over a period of five years, and then no more.

Zionists maintain that the White Paper was of a piece with appeasement as practised in Europe. From 1936 onwards, Haj Amin Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem and leader of Palestinian nationalism, had devised a combination of political and para-military tactics against the Mandate. Over 1,000 Arabs had been killed in skirmishes. The High Commissioner, Sir Harold MacMichael, believed that future Arab allegiance had to be bought at Jewish expense. MacMichael had the support of his local officials, of Anthony Eden as Foreign Secretary, of Lord Moyne as Secretary of State for Colonies, and of the entire Colonial Office. One consideration alone was genuine: that any disturbance in Palestine during the war risked holding down troops which could not be spared. That officials insisted on adducing fantasies about a Fifth Column and potential Nazi spies smuggled in as Jews – of which there is no recorded instance – reveals their insincerity and brings into question personal motivations. For though it was true that Palestine was at peace from 1939 to 1945, placation of Arabs was tied to the mass-murder of Jews.

At the time of the White Paper's publication, George VI's private secretary was found writing to Eden's successor, Halifax, 'The King has heard . . . that a number of Jewish refugees from different countries were surreptitiously getting into Palestine, and he is glad to think that steps have been taken to prevent these people leaving their country of origin.' The King had grasped the logic of the

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White Paper. On the second day of the war, with the Germans shooting Jews in Poland, a British coastal patrol opened fire on illegal immigrants landing at Tel Aviv, and killed two. This was the inevitable outcome of what Dr Wasserstein describes as 'a concerted British effort to seal the escape routes used by Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe'. At the insistence of the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office demurring, every means was used to ensure that Jews were retained wherever they were. Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria were pressured to let none out. Strong language was used to instruct the Turks to expel any Jews entering Turkey.

In the first flush of war-hysteria, moreover, Jewish refugees already in England were interned, and a policy of deportation was started until one ship, the *Arandora Star*, was torpedoed with heavy loss of life. Apparently an example had to be set to deter Jews whom the bureaucrats imagined to be about to swarm over them. Humanity on their part, they seem to have believed, would invite Hitler to propel unwanted boat-loads over the seas. About a dozen small boats did in fact try to reach Palestine, each one an amalgam of separate tragedies, and none more tragic than the *Struma*, bringing 769 refugees out of Romania through the Black Sea in December 1941. The ambassador in Ankara, Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, otherwise known for employing as his valet the famous German spy Cicero, was moved to pity the people on board. At which S.E.V. Luke of the Colonial Office noted,

> This is the first occasion on which . . . the Turkish Government has shown any signs of being ready to help in frustrating these illegal immigrant ships, and the Ambassador then goes and spoils the whole effect on absurdly misjudged humanitarian grounds.

Quite why the *Struma* sank is still not clear, but even then MacMichael did not wish to admit the only two survivors into Palestine.

Throughout 1942 the Foreign Office received reports of the Final Solution in Central Europe, and that December the Allies issued a declaration on German crimes against Jews ('These repeated threatenings debase the currency' according to Eden). From then on, those who did not know about the mass-murders were only those who did not care to know. Officialdom remained unmoved. Crocodile tears were shed, committees were spawned, but every serious proposal for saving lives died the bureaucratic death. For no discernible reason, the Foreign Office strangled the idea of bombing the Auschwitz railheads or crematoria, though the Air Ministry was willing to undertake the mission, and bombers were operating over the whole area as from March 1944. By the end of the war half the White Paper quota therefore remained unfilled.

One of the most disturbing features brought out by Dr Wasserstein is how during the war Churchill had the Jewish question close to his heart but could do little about it. He was thwarted by the officials, kept in the dark, lied to. So it was that the British government became an accessory to genocide.

Were the Palestinian Arabs at least grateful that Jews were not to be permitted to live among them, but kept instead in their countries of origins to be exterminated? Not at all. Haj Amin spent the war in Berlin promoting Hitlerism, and if he owed the British nothing, equally the British owed him nothing. Had Jewish refugees been granted asylum in Palestine or elsewhere, their psychological impulse for a national home would not have been the same, and who knows where they might have settled afterwards? The only certain achievement of British policy was to drive Jews into a despair deep enough to found a state of their own, and so bring down in ruins the Whitehall conception of the Middle East. If *raison d'état* is to apply, let it at least work: British policy managed the unusual coup of being both fruitless and shameful.

The record, as Dr Wasserstein concludes, leaves 'a profoundly saddening impression', for it is a case-study in how the empire died. The bureaucrats concerned did not deserve, had not the moral capacity, to rule anyone. The Colonial Office no longer exists to abuse the weak and oppressed, and before wondering once more why the Foreign Office is not disbanded in the national interest, one asks oneself who they were, these officials who brought out what Churchill called 'the usual silly objections' to everything human.

Here is Victor Cavendish-Bentinck of the Joint Intelligence Committee (!) writing in July 1943 that like the Poles the Jews 'tend to exaggerate German atrocities in order to stoke us up'. Here is Sir John Shuckburgh, deputy under-secretary at the Colonial Office, noting of Jews how, 'I am convinced that in their hearts they hate us and have always hated us; they hate all Gentiles.' Here is Armine Dew, head of a department in the Foreign Office, minuting in September 1944, 'In my opinion a disproportionate amount of the time of this office is wasted in dealing with these wailing Jews.' Opinions of this sort were then current in Berlin. Kindly to children and animals, no doubt, and trained at the best academies, these civil servants were safe at their desks right till the end of the war, lunching at their clubs as usual, bound for pensions and decorations, penning busy little memoes about deportation without the capacity to visualise a cattle truck; unable to imagine what it is like to be hunted down to death; unable to perceive the extent to which they were the hunters.

Valerie Miner

In the Dark

Son of Morning by JOYCE CAROL OATES *Gollancz* £5.95
Class Reunion by RONA JAFFE *Hodder & Stoughton* £5.50
The Summer Portrait by ROBERT HARLING *Chatto & Windus* £5.50

Son of Morning is a parable about an evangelical preacher who richly personifies American Manifest Destiny in all its brutal vision. Joyce Carol Oates's possessed prophet is terrifyingly close to Jim Jones: his pentecostalism here is not a quest for transcendence but a grasping at mortal power. Conceived during the gang rape of a plain country girl, Nathaniel Vickery is born somewhere on the vast American prairies in 1940. He experiences his first revelation at age five, while embracing a poisonous snake during a meeting of backwoods revivalists. By the time he is ten, he is seriously preaching his version of the Good News. Ultimately this untutored evangelist has blinding apparitions, cures the ill and becomes the saviour of the Midwest.

Oates writes in many tongues, moving in and out of prayers, visions, the words of the omniscient narrator and the first-person diarist. Her various voices create a tone that is awe-filled rather than ironic: she bears equal sympathy for the obsessed redeemer and for his desperate followers.

Nathaniel's preaching reaches thousands of simple people trapped in the American hinterland by their poverty, their lack of imagination or their cruel God. He is eventually betrayed by one of his disciples, but he survives; he seems eternal. Few people realise that he is sustained less by mystical communion than by a very earthbound power. Oates's brilliant characterisation of the spiritual as an expression of power rather than love or conscience is a terrifying revelation. Like the mass suicide-murder in Guyana last November, she bears witness to the bloody shadows of the American apocalypse.

Class Reunion might be a modernisation of Mary McCarthy's *The Group*, only set at Radcliffe instead of Vassar. It is an elegant scrapbook about four upper middle class ladies who grow more and more privileged during the 20 years after graduation. Annabel, the Southern lady, is the first to 'go all the way' sexually and becomes known as the dormitory tramp; she grows up to be a buyer at Bloomindales. Chris, the awkward scholar, falls in love with a homosexual and spends too many years of her life winning him into marriage. Emily is the neurotic Jew whose parents' expectations move her into a stifling marriage in Beverly Hills. Daphne, the 'perfect' WASP debutante, manages to hide her epilepsy from all her friends.

Jaffe's description of Daphne's epilepsy and later of her mongoloid daughter are the closest she comes to originality. Her characters are informed by a mainstream feminism, by a *Fear of Flying* erotic egalitarianism; but they never really surface to their own identities, never break through the predictable formulas of unhappiness.

The Summer Portrait returns us to the male stereotype of sexual balance. Quentin Saltmarsh is a successful portrait painter frolicking amid the earnestness of postwar London. Confident of his talent and his virility, he often confuses the two. However, for an artist supposedly absorbed by facial character, Saltmarsh is very preoccupied with legs, tits and asses. 'Her legs were finely shaped, not as long as Natasha's, more slender than Emma's, longer than Juanita's.' Saltmarsh's portraits bring critical acclaim and large fees. He enjoys good food, a chic automobile and a succession of beautiful lovers.

While it's a relief to read a book about an artist's rewards rather than his angst, one must doubt the improbable facility of Saltmarsh's artistic and sexual triumphs:

> He moved from the window to her chair, raised her, kissed her gently. 'We have been talking too long,' he said, embracing her with one arm, unzipping her dress with the other.

This is how Quentin Saltmarsh achieves the quintessential possession of his women – in his bed and on his canvas. It's as if he took John Berger's observation about Western art ('Men act, women appear') not as an aesthetic criticism but as a personal mandate.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

John Coleman

Exteriors

Manhattan (AA) *Gate, Notting Hill; Screen on the Hill; Classic, Oxford Street; Cinecenta*
The Main Event (AA) *Warner West End; ABC Shaftesbury Avenue; Classic, Oxford Street; Scene*
Sidney Sheldon's Bloodline (X) *Plaza 2*

Cosmopolitans who keep abreast of their *Time* and their *New York Review of Books* (or *Observer*, in this case) will know that there are two sharply divergent ways of looking at Woody Allen's latest movie. The former gave it and its director/star/co-writer the red-carpet treatment in a cover story of fulsome reverence: the latter allowed space for the American essayist, novelist and screenwriter Joan Didion to give them both the works. Her broadside took in not just *Manhattan* but *Annie Hall* and the more vulnerable *Interiors* as well – 'the paradigm for the action in these recent Woody Allen movies,' she ungently proposes, 'is high school' and elsewhere pinpoints their 'peculiar and hermetic self-regard'. Their 'in'-talk is just 'smart', 'meant to convey the message that the speaker knows his way around Lit and History, not to mention Show Biz'.

After *Time*'s near-canonisation, Miss Didion's acerbity is refreshing; but is it craven to suggest, in turn, that some mediation is in order? Of course, the not-so-separate worlds of Allen's last three films are élitist, snob-cultural, New York chic, full of encounters in OK restaurants between people with time on their hands and themselves on their minds. And, as inevitably, these films are going to be cried up to the skies by a lot of metropolitan critics – and crowds more people with aspirations that way – who genuinely do recognise a form of 'their' world, however superficial that world may be up there on the screen. Allen is hardly slanting his talents towards the quotidian concerns of the blue-collar worker; and it seems hard to reproach him, by implication, for not doing so. All the harder, in the event, when a movie like *Manhattan* already carries a pretty heavy freight of auto-criticism. The Allen-character even explodes somewhere that he and his buddy are behaving like six-year-olds.

Manhattan is a highly romantic and seductive film about a small group of privileged, often tatty men and women, maybe wasting their various gifts. The key-word is romantic and the holder of the key is Isaac Davis (Woody Allen), a TV comedy writer whose second ex-wife (chilly blonde Meryl Streep) has left him for another woman and just published a down-putting book in which he figures. Isaac's best friend is Yale (Michael Murphy, the errant husband in Mazursky's softer-centred *An Unmarried Woman*), another prospective writer who buys a Porsche instead and is again straying from wedlock, this time into the arms of a garrulous intellectual phoney, Mary (Diane Keaton). Incredulously repelled by this Mary at first acquaintance, Isaac gradually falls for her and gets her for a while when conscience-stricken Yale dumps her: this entails Isaac's dumping a delightful 17-year-old, Tracy (Mariel Hemingway, heart-stoppingly delivering some of the straightest lines). By the time Isaac has junked his TV work, *also* to write a book – near the end, he tapes a skeletal short story which is effectively the film's germ – lost Mary back to Yale, and selfishly tried to reclaim Tracy, it's too late: the girl is following his earlier advice and off to a drama school in London. 'What's six months if we still love each other?' she too sensibly asks, to which he can only respond, 'Hey, don't be so *mature*'. One of a few verbal items that may wedge in mature craws is Tracy's – and *Manhattan*'s – final urging: 'Have a little faith in people'. After which Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue' surges up, over Gordon Willis's marvellous shots of the New York skyline.

The same music over similar images has opened the piece, culminating in a burst of fireworks I found infinitely more exhilarating than that critics' morsel, the glowing *bateau mouche* in Bresson's *Four Nights of a Dreamer*; and, to my continuing satisfaction, the music from about a dozen unforgettable Gershwin songs ('Do-Do-Do', 'S'Wonderful', 'He Loves and She Loves') provides an always nostalgic, sometimes ironic background heightening to a ride in a new car, a drive through the park, Isaac's breathless last street-scamper towards Tracy ('Strike Up the Band'). This unabashed use of perhaps the greatest of urban 'pop' composers may be seen as linking hands with Isaac's dangerous list of what makes life worthwhile, in itself readable as a counter to Mary's downright silly 'Academy of the Overrated' (Mahler, Scott Fitzgerald, Ingmar Bergman): Isaac (Allen?) goes for Groucho Marx, Willie Mays, Marlon Brando, Sinatra, *A Sentimental Education*, and so on. So I prefer Isaac's list, even if this does seem the kind of parlour game better conducted in private. The defence that Isaac is *not* Woody Allen (the character certainly displays more sexual bottle than Allen's usual screen persona), nor even meant to be particularly admirable (his low treatment of Tracy), is a bit thin here. Time and again, Isaac – Tracy apart – has the most pained and troubled, somehow 'central' utterances. Take this as a quote, *the* quote: 'People in Manhattan are constantly creating these real unnecessary neurotic problems for themselves- that keep them from dealing with more terrifying unsolvable problems about the universe.'

And yet, heard in its context, even that clunker is not as bad as it reads. For the old, diffidently coughing, wryly wisecracking Woody is omnipresent, cutting the sentiment down to size. 'Does he play baseball? Does he wear dresses?' he raps at his wife, visiting his small son at the ladies' apartment. 'You should think of me as a'. . . sort of detour on the highway of life,' he mouths to Tracy. Ecstatic in a cab, he assures Mary, 'You look so beautiful I can hardly keep my eyes on the meter'. And he (with his co-writer Marshall Brickman) spreads the funnies around, down to a party lady confessing, 'I had an orgasm and my doctor told me it was the wrong kind'. The result is an engrossing entertainment, a hybridisation of *Annie Hall* and *Interiors*. People wander in and out of frame, undisconcertingly like life, and – at a crucial moment – the camera simply holds and holds, as Bergman loves to have it do, on young Mariel Hemingway's awfully hurt and working face.

When one reflects that Joan Didion, together with her husband John Gregory Dunne, was responsible for the generally hairy screenplay for the Streisand version of *A Star is Born*, one wonders if there might not be a submerged *mea culpa* in the lady's chastisement of Woody's hollow scribblers. *That* movie was the first, incidentally, in which the hand of Streisand's erstwhile hairdresser, Jon Peters, was evident, and it is clear from *The Main Event* – produced by Mr Peters and Miss Streisand – that Barbra is increasingly becoming her own woman, B. Strident with a vengeance. Howard (*Slither*, *Hearts of the West*) Zieff is credited as director. Streisand here belts uncontrollably through what might have made a lovely Forties comedy, as Hillary ('They don't call you The Nose for nothing') Kramer, an embezzled cosmetics top executive who suddenly finds her only realisable asset is Ryan O'Neal as a womanising boxer who hates fighting. There is a nice sight-gag in his one-man driving school, a structure shaped like a giant boxing-glove, and Whitman Mayo is splendid as O'Neal's bemused and aging black manager. The laughter falls away under The Nose's relentless antics and by the cop-out finale (kiss-in-the-ring) it is woefully apparent she should have taken the O'Neal role: she damn near does, anyway. Sidney Sheldon wrote a novel and *Sidney Sheldon's Bloodline* – as who should say, *Wm. Shakespeare's Hamlet* – is a lamentable, ultimately incomprehensible and nasty thriller, with Terence Young throwing to the wolves James Mason, Audrey Hepburn, Ben Gazzara, Irene Papas . . . but why go on?

Television

Julian Barnes

Some Hope

On watch the other night for signs that the ITV strike was turning BBC men complacent, I was delighted to catch Richard Baker ending a BBC-2 Proms relay with a reference to 'Mozart's Symphony No 29 by Mozart'; he immediately followed this by telling us of 'the hundredth centenary of John Ireland'. Hoping for more clangers, I monitored Richard Baker on *Face the Music* (BBC-2) with Richard Baker; but alas, apart from a manifest contentment at never having heard of the painter John Martin, there was little to rebuke him for. Still, it was pleasant to be able to confirm that *FTM* remains the most incomparably nauseating programme on the box. Quite why

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this is so has always eluded me, but I suspect it must be something to do with the smugness of it all; the jaunty bonhomie with which it is conducted; the giggling camaraderie displayed by the panel; the incompetent 'acting' of Richard Baker and Robin Ray; the foot-waggling, arm-waving 'appreciation' of the extracts; the lapdog audience; the disturbingly young appearance of Ray (what will Robin do when he grows up? collect his pension); the cloying avuncularity of Joseph Cooper; the jollifying embourgeoisement of all the music played; and the vauntingly presented titbits of bio-musical background ('César Franck was run down by a bus') which are greeted as if they were the result of long years of original research. There may well be some other factors, and I'll get back to you when I've rooted them out.

Max Beerbohm once caricatured Charles Ricketts – the subject of BBC-2's *Poverty and Oysters* – and his artist friend Charles Shannon in a parody version of Rossetti's 'Found': Ricketts plays the country drover trying to rescue the fallen Shannon; while the form of prostitution the latter has chosen is membership of the Royal Academy. Perhaps it was more witty than apposite: the programme didn't make out Ricketts (for all his diversity) to be that far from the mainstream; indeed, he even exhibited annually at the Academy. He was a painter, sculptor, book, stage and costume designer, collector, critic and enthusiast: 'incredibly gifted', according to Sir Kenneth Clark. 'Gifted', of course, is always a loaded word. People who are 'gifted' somehow by definition never make it big, always end up squandering their 'gifts'. In Ricketts's case, Clark suggested that if he'd concentrated on just one or two skills, he would have been better known. No doubt, but would he have been better *tout court*? Artistic diversification is doubtless the enemy of fame, but is it really the enemy of talent? Ricketts, for all his skill and facility, kept reminding you of other people – Beardsley, Burne-Jones, Mackintosh, the Secession, Rodin – rather than of himself. There are artists who have diversified their talent as much as Ricketts and who, without being greater, have nonetheless given off a stronger personal style: Cocteau, or Ayrton, for example.

This isn't to say that Ricketts was negligible, or the programme a waste of time. On the contrary: television has a useful – and insufficiently exploited – capacity for resuscitating sub-eminent figures of the past whom we might not be bothered to read a whole book about. *Poverty and Oysters* was often waffly in its praise – at one point we were told that 'Ricketts's involvement with art was possibly unique' (so was Goering's, so is Tony Jacklin's) – but well conveyed its subject's invigorating enthusiasm for art. He loved creating it, owning it, buying it: 'I had just burst into perspiration', he wrote of a Puvis de Chavannes canvas, 'so great was my lust of possession'. But, omni-talented as ever, he also enjoyed giving it away: he once spotted a Masaccio in a junk-shop across a busy street, bought it for 25 shillings, and promptly donated it to the National Gallery. He may not have stood for any very complicated view about art; but at least he stood for the practice and the love of it. At one end of London sat Roger Fry with his 'boring French paintings', as Clark put it; at the other sat Ricketts, turning out bronzes which looked a bit too much like Rodin. But the second-rate practitioner is always preferable to the first-rate critic (a fact first-rate critics too rarely remember); it was Ricketts's establishment, not Fry's, that Clark described as 'the one house in London where you'd never be bored'.

On David Dimbleby's soft-nosed *Person to Person* (BBC-1) Sir Peter Hall described himself as 'a business tycoon-cum-politician-cum-doctor-cum-psychiatrist-cum artist (you hope)-cum-play-director-cum-public figure-cum-object that people throw rotten eggs at, or praise, or whatever'. Asked about that intrusive 'you hope', Hall said he had uttered it in a spirit of 'conceited humility'. He spoke of his 'very very complex job', but also of the worrying inner voice which whispers 'You're actually no good at all at any of this'. He spoke of his East Anglian puritanism, but looked (white shoes, pale suit, blue shirt, white tie, chin-warmer beard) like a sybaritic Mongolian pork-butcher. Was it, you wondered, that the man was a cracking paradox, or was he just backing into the limelight, and leading with a bottom already well bronzed by the footlights? He certainly talked very suavely about being very shy. He said things like, 'I understand – I think – music quite deeply'. The engaging caveats, the modest desire for other people to judge 'if I achieve any art or not': were they not perhaps a little too pressing? And then one fretted about that expression 'conceited humility': was more than half of it really pulling its weight?

Sport

Russell Davies

Not Cricket

☐ 'Anybody who's been to South Africa wants to go again,' says David Gower. Being about as stark white as it is possible to be without actually fainting away, he will have had every encouragement to make such a remark. I forget which of his colleagues it was who added that yes, he'd like a trip to South Africa, because 'it's a nice place'; but whoever it was, he is to be congratulated on cramming such a savage irony into an apparent understatement. For the average prosperous white, South Africa is of course a wonderful place, and he can afford at any time to make the visiting white sportsman spectacularly welcome. But a sportsman visiting now, in the present climate of international opinion, would be simply overwhelmed with grateful hospitality: surfeited with ox-roasts, deafened by the day-long chonk of ice-cubes, flattered to death by peevish freckly blondes.

It was left to the England captain to spoil this vision of luxury. Refusing his invitation, he remarked that 'any achievements in multi-racial sport over there have been obtained through isolation'. It was good to have this, and promptly, from Brearley himself, for though on his form as a player he would scarcely be in great demand in Port Talbot let alone Port Elizabeth, he is held as a thinker in such high esteem by his players that he may still persuade the more seducable brethren to modify their dreams of a well-paid holiday. Yet it strikes me as a pity that Brearley's influence, or anyone's, should need to be relied on in this matter. It ought to be enough for young England players that they have black colleagues whose position would be betrayed by the acceptance of apartheid's hospitality. A complicating factor here is that England players at the moment also have white South African colleagues (Mike Procter is apparently the English-based organiser for the currently projected trip) with whose opinions they have probably been made familiar – and with some of whose ambitions ('it's hard on us, we only want to play test cricket' at first sounds a reasonable plea) they may readily sympathise.

I dare say the remedy to these embarrassments will emerge as a matter of course, once our own house is maturely in order. At the moment we have an all-white team, not all that long released from the regrettable captaincy of a South African. But when home-grown black players have begun to make themselves indispensable to the England side, it should not be hard to muster the loyalty of their white team-mates against the fact of discrimination in South Africa. In the meantime, it looks as though pressure from other sports (particularly athletics, where Britain's participation in the Olympics would be under threat) will be required to prevent our England cricket invitees from making a big mistake. No wonder 'it isn't cricket' has more or less died out as an idiomatic protest against injustice.

☐ John Conteh's performance in Atlantic City was a notable example of courage and craftsmanship; but his power is so diminished that the style had to be amateur ringcraft, from start to finish. His left-hand jabbing, two or three clean scoring jabs at a time, was about the crispest I have seen him put across; but the right was very nearly negligible. I was amazed by all the commentators who were 'heartened' to see Conteh's right hand going over. For a start, it put in no appearance at all till the third round, and subsequently there were countless occasions when the jabbing took Matthew Saad Muhammad's guard up to his head leaving the ribs open for the dug-in right – which Conteh did not throw. Such rights as he risked were head-shots over the top, aimed in hopes of achieving a glancing blow on the temple; one could feel Conteh's fear of burying the hand in the target as he used to do, taking the impact solidly through the wrist. At no stage in this fight, or in the previous two, has Conteh opened up the kind of attack where the damaged hand would take an equal share (in terms of destructive effect, a major share) in a good old 'two-fisted barrage'.

There can be small doubt that had the hand been available for the use Conteh once gave it, Saad Muhammad would have been as physically humiliated by the end of this fight as he was, in any case, tactically bemused for the better part of it. But the fact that the champion had enough left to flatten our man in the fourteenth testifies to Conteh's loss of firepower. He ought to retire now, before he starts to get beaten by men whose only dignity resides in their strength of punch. It would be a good time to go. Conteh has made his noisy mistakes in the past, but on this occasion he performed admirably, applauded the decision in sporting fashion, endorsed it publicly afterwards, befriended his opponent and acknowledged his title-worthiness. Short of giving his

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purse to the local orphanage, Conteh could not possibly have done more honour to his sport. No-one wants him to go on and donate his face and kidneys to boxing as well.

☐ One man who has made the sad decision to pack it in is Malcolm Macdonald, and I hope it will become clear during his retirement that he was not the balloon-headed braggart his publicity made him out to be. I talked to him once during one of his injury lay-offs; and though his gangsterishly frayed upper lip made him look just as dangerous at close quarters as from afar, he struck me as a thoughtful type of bloke who hadn't cared to stoke up his opinions to match the belligerence of his image. Later on, I saw him get his five Wembley goals against Cyprus, and I'm glad now that he got them, even though my feeling at the time was that this particular performance owed more to Tarzan than to the tradition of G. O. Smith and Dixie Dean.

Radio

Peter Porter

Echt

One of the attractions of drama on radio is its shapelessness. This is no paradox but a tribute to the medium itself: a play on the air can take any form it chooses, ranging all the way from monologue to the largest of set-pieces. Into their allotted space playwright and producer tip almost any ingredient which can be represented by sound – and even, in some cases, by silence. Thus the bustle of Jacobean comedy fits radio as neatly as the gurgles and non-sequiturs of experimental earplay. I was reminded of this protean force in broadcasting by my return to listening after a refreshing holiday drought. Plays seemed to come at me from all points. The most interesting by far told a strange story compellingly, but seemed to have no particular shape other than the space it occupied in the evening's programmes. This was *I Never Killed My German* (Radio 3) the first play for radio by Carey Harrison. Almost everything about it was improbable, but nothing was unconvincing.

A sexy daughter recommends the holidaying Bishop of Cologne to her widowed father in Essex. Willy, the father, has to contend with a handsome, celibate presence he might easily have killed in the war. As Stephen Murray played the Bishop, he was all sing-song gentleness and calendar-quotation Goethe. Maurice Denham put the least comfortable of vibrations into Willy's voice: the sexual anxiety of the old shone out of it brilliantly. The action was dreamlike, or nightmare-like, and the melancholy presence of the coastal towns of East Anglia haunted the play. The end had the illogical inevitability of a dream, as Willy killed his German at last. If the play was about anything but itself, it seemed to develop the notion that some part of ourselves needs a war, and when that war is withheld, baffled atavism takes over our dreams. Mr Harrison may not have meant to, but he produced a piece of echt-radio – sounds and sense in conjunction – and he was beautifully served by the actors and by Sean Macloughlin's production.

Jeremy Seabrook's two playlets, *A Change of Life* and *A Mature Relationship* (both Radio 3) were deeply depressing but successful after their lights. Each was a piece of prinked-out sociology, imaginative only in its selection from the many possible miseries earthed in some social worker's files. Two working-class oldies fail to leave their spouses, since to do so would be to walk into a mirror, and a 'just-for-company' relationship between a teacher and her office-worker boyfriend splutters to an end on their ritual Saturday evening together. Good actors endow such ruthless eavesdropping with real heartbreak, but documentary is not drama, and not necessarily as well suited to radio as fantasy is. Richard Wortley brought great accomplishment to producing these half-hour slices of life, but, in the end, life was just what they didn't remind you of. People can be as unlucky and as glum as those in Jeremy Seabrook's vignettes, but they are mercifully less typical.

Hope (Radio 3) by David Cregan was a disappointment, being altogether too conventional. Cregan's extensive fantasy *The Monument* was one of the most inventive radio plays of the past decade, and it was surprising to find him writing a Seventies variation on Maugham's *The Breadwinner* for his latest drama. A middle-aged man with six children puts up with an hour of Hampstead bullying by his family (interspersed with more bullying by his analyst), until he turns on them all. Ostensibly he wants to kill his children, which seems a good idea after one has listened to them chattering on, but really he is struggling with the automatic voices of liberal shame. There was nothing witty and nothing new in the play, with the exception of the part of the old family retainer whose kowtowing to her horrid charges was rendered without words, being made up of a hundred different snufflings, purrings and obsequious gruntings – sounds that give delight and hurt not.

In *Borges at 80* (Radio 3) the grand old man told his translator (I almost wrote tormentor, for reasons I'll give later) Norman Thomas di Giovanni that he had never written a real book. He also said that if a book's not readable, it's not real. He spoke, indeed, many attractive and memorable things during the programme, which compensated me for the boredom I felt while extracts of his stories were being read. Borges is a noble and courageous man whose work has had a profound influence on contemporary fiction. I just cannot enjoy it. The passage from *The Aleph* which was quoted was characteristically verbose – Borges didn't envision all these things, he just loved the flow of words he put into them. Visions are so much drier than that. But on death he was very moving. 'I always think of death as being our great hope', he said; 'I stand in fear of immortality, of transcendence.' He summed up that perennial absurdity, the Nobel Prize: 'Not to award me the Nobel Prize is an old Scandinavian tradition.' The form of the programme was peculiar. Giovanni catechised Borges as though he were deciding whether or not to let him through the pearly gates. It seemed a great presumption on friendship. How do you reply to a question such as this – 'You are thinking all the time about erotic themes, Jorge Luis Borges?' Perhaps only with Borges's question-as-answer, 'I should be thinking about Cervantes?' More presumptuous was Giovanni's 'What do you feel about your blindness, Borges?' and more illuminating Borges's response, 'I think it is a gift, a tool, an instrument.' There was some Radiophonic music and other interruptions but mostly the time was spent within the ambience of Borges's mind. It was time strangely and beautifully spent.

Radio 4's *In Hock* cheered me up. I have never pawned anything, but I have had resort to moneylenders, to the horror of respectable friends. I was glad to salute my cousins in sin and to enjoy the certainty that we are all much nicer and jollier people than the rest of you who live within your incomes or have collateral enough to be given large overdrafts.

Theatre

John Arden

They Do But Jest

Woyzeck by BÜCHNER and **Mahagonny** by BRECHT and WEILL *Half Moon*
Romeo and Juliet by SHAKESPEARE *Old Vic*
Down and Out in Paris by GEORGE ORWELL adapted by LOU STEIN *Gate*
Carnival War a Go Hot by MICHAEL HASTINGS *Theatre Upstairs*

A year or so ago, I was on a brief visit to London, and found myself queuing savagely in rain-swept Earlham Street, where the doors of the egalitarian Warehouse remained arrogantly closed nearly 30 minutes after the announced time of opening. A grumbling fellow-victim of the RSC's nonchalance was reproached by a bright American lady, who said: 'This must be the British way, I guess – the old wartime spirit, the blitz, Dunkirk . . .' Indeed it was, and we realised that we were expected to live up to it, the country having fallen on hard times, but its artists smiling through in the best Ensa tradition. It was war once again, against inflation, against trade unions, against terrorism, against unemployment and the malicious misrepresentations of the foreign press. To this end we must remember that not only was our theatre the nonsuch of the world, but – with the exception of our military/police counter-insurgency expertise – it was also our most viable national export. It was thus our duty as members of the middle-classes to support it, at whatever cost in personal inconvenience.

The directorates of the subsidised companies were in the business of public prestige. The American lady was by no means the only appreciative tourist in their sodden queues; we were not there to enjoy ourselves with any particular playwright's notions, but to prove to these visitors that Britain could still dish it out; while the visitors themselves were there to feel awe at our capacity for rising superior. Today, with a change of government, things are not so very different. All that has happened is that we (the progressive culture-consuming we) must now add Mrs Thatcher to the list of those with whom we are at war. Though we must also try to convince her that

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in the matter of the performing arts she has got herself on the wrong side. Let her but keep the cash flowing and behold there shall be such wonders. Don't ask exactly what the plays will be about – it will be theatre for theatre's sake and well worth every penny. It will also include a proportion of acceptable dissidence, which may be misunderstood by some of her more horrible colleagues – but: 'No no, they do but jest – revolutionism in jest: no offence in the world.'

There are various techniques for achieving this. One: so surround the actors with stage-management and ooh-ah costumes and sci-fi properties that they must struggle like netted conger-eels to find the playwrights among the significant interpretations. As poor Woyzeck was processed by his progressive physician, so the tumultuous Brecht and Büchner can be processed into the condition of well-worn classics, assumed to be familiar to all who come to see them, so that those who come to see them can concentrate their attention solely upon the director's new devices. Anyone meeting the work for the first time in such a guise will not make head or tail of it: and it cannot therefore arouse the subversive passions of its original creators. Additional modern dialogue will help, not hinder, the effect because it will only emphasise the necessary irrelevance to our own social circumstances of the acceptably ancient fables. Necessary, that is to say, for the preservation of British theatre as an environment for the criticism of British society, while at the same time it remains an advertisement for it and an urgent plea to Mrs Thatcher and her Mr Norman to appreciate the subtle virtues of allowing the children to play down the East End to the other insubordinate children, while the proper adult family receives Shakespeare at the Old Vic in their business suits and evening gowns and a grant from the National Westminster Bank.

Two: lest Shakespeare – your actual well-worn classic – look as though he has got into the unpredictable hands of talented actors who might end up allowing their performances to make individual statements of the dramatist's intention – which with a Nurse like Barbara Jefford in the *Romeo* cast very nearly comes to pass – have your designer run a vast, apparently steam-driven, dockyard gantry threateningly downstage whenever the company are getting away with clearly-articulated dialogue. This will unnerve them, and prove to the audience that the management is firmly in charge. Any doubt still remaining can be dispelled by ending the first act bang in the middle of one of the Prince of Verona's speeches.

Three: a precise author like George Orwell (who is dead like Brecht, but being British may still be thought to have something to say to us today about the awful life of the unemployed) can be so adapted for the stage that the main interest of the play is to see how his experiences can be enclosed in a small theatre by a small cast and ingenious juggling with twin narrators. The public will admire the skill of the theatrical craftwork, and forget to burn down Parliament.

Four: a living author like Michael Hastings (who is demonstrably far too concerned about black men, and far too knowing about the internal writhings of the military/police counter-insurgency establishment – which he regards indeed as an arkful of dangerous clowns creating all the trouble they purport to protect us from) cannot actually be stopped, because that would be censorship: and you cannot censor the theatre when its purpose is to display the liberal national pluralism. TV is different, because it is watched by all the plebs, and the Whitehouse faction can be permitted to work there unobstructed, for the better moral welfare of proletarian juveniles. So the thing to do is to persuade the playwright that if he must write these genuinely mischievous plays, the place to have them put on is somewhere like the Theatre Upstairs, where no one goes to see them except the aficionados of modern theatre, who will admire the skill of the craftwork, and go to the Half Moon next week, and the Warehouse the week after that, and compare notes upon the approaches of the respective directors to the very varied texts they have in hand. *Carnival War a Go Hot* deals with the Notting Hill Carnival: by all means put it on the week before that event: the topicality will be piquant. But from Sloane Square it will cause no riot. If the Acklam Hall had been the venue, though, a more dangerous result might be predicted: and someone might have had to take steps against it. But then the Whitehouse situation (*plebs,* and of dusky hue . . .) would have obtained: and liberal pluralism would not have applied.

Oh theatre for theatre's sake – such fun for those who make it, and gives such scope for self-congratulation to those who support it: and so much of it is so *good* . . . when assessed on its own terms. If it's what the public wants, and what the artists like to do, and what the subsidisers like to pay for, who am I to be so cranky as to wish for an environment for each play and an audience for each play that would really carry forward the specific vision of each playwright into the unpredictable world outside? Our society is at war: indeed the British Army is at war. All these plays are in some sort about war and rancorous hatred. Any reason to believe that their productions, as presented in the places and after the fashions I have described, can do more than provide a basis of cultural complacency to enable the real-life warfare to be waged with increased efficiency . . .?

Weekend Competition

No 2580 **Set by A. Boteman**

You all know 'Twas brillig and the slithy toves . . .' What we want is a new nonsense poem full of nonsense words but bearing the same appearance of sense as 'Jabberwocky'. In the modern mode, please. N.B. We are not asking you to update Carroll. Is that clear? Twelve lines max; by 7 September.

Result of No 2577 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

We asked for temperance-style hymns and songs designed to turn people away from their addiction to petrol.

Report **by The Lemon Kid**

I put the lemon on all the Kiplingy music-hall ballads: while there might be some similarities between Sally Ally numbers and those moral chansons of the popular boards, the two should be kept apart for comp purposes. Some distinguished names took a squirt or two when this ruling was decided at the weekly preliminary judging conference at the stainless-steel Round Table in the Comp Complex. This conference, at which all the resident Reporters are present and speak their minds quite franky (except for Fat Jeff, still in extended disgrace after 2569), is designed to thrash out guidelines and establish parameters for the week's lucky judge. We also kick around pressing matters of Complex business, like the date of the next Party (watch this space), and chew over the state of morale among our contribs. At the moment the Johnson affair still rumbles on. 'Isn't Joyce Johnson getting a bit above herself?' writes Peter Alexander, and puts in the welly over Joyce's own winning entry in 2574: 'Does she really think it's clever to rhyme "butts" with "Sowerbutts"? How flat can you get? Try this for size:

> Joyce,
> Having won, will doubtless rejoice;
> But the losers of the competition
> Should send a petition.'

A quid for this squib (as also to last week's winners: Little Keith got slack); eight to those printed.

> Confounded tanker on the wave,
> Whose cargo squalid sinners crave,
> Who bidd'st the mighty white man creep,
> To men who eat the eyes of sheep;
> O hear us when we cry to thee,
> For those in peril at BP.
>
> Unholy spirit dark and crude,
> Upon whose price we daily brood,
> Let every guzzler's lust decrease,
> Eschew the car, and bike in peace;
> O hear us when we cry to thee,
> 'Keep British oil beneath the sea.'

TIM HOPKINS

The Sayings of Père Patriarche

"A horse that does not run to form does not justify a franc of expense. It is the same with a wine."

PÈRE PATRIARCHE
RED & WHITE VIN DE TABLE
BOTTLED IN FRANCE BY PATRIARCHE

For once, don't worry about the wine.

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Blessed are the smaller cars,
For they have little tanks;
The secret of the Road is theirs,
They earn the Nation's thanks.

The Lord who gave us petrol
To make our engines work
Loves motorists who stay at home
And do not drive berserk.

Still to the humble walker
He doth Himself impart;
O think of Him ye drivers
When greedy motors start!

Lord, we Thy Essence seek;
May ours this blessing be;
Give us the gift of staying put
For oil economy.

T. GRIFFITHS

Don't go down to the pump, lad!
Don't go down to the pump!
For if you do down to the pump, lad,
Britain goes down the sump.

Flee from the fearful end, lad,
That over Britain looms!
Don't wait till you go round the bend, lad,
As you choke in petrol fumes.

Gas-guzzlers go to Hell, lad,
As sure as eggs are eggs:
Better a bike with a bell, lad,
And a pair of pounding legs.

So get out your trusty bike, lad,
And clip on your bicycle clip.
Or else go off on a hike, lad,
Or perhaps on a sailing ship.

PETER PETERSON

We won't waste petrol, no-no-no,
In cars we will not ride,
By bicycle we'll go-go-go,
Our cheeks will glow with pride.
Though motorists cry woe-woe-woe
Still onward will we glide,
We won't waste petrol no-no-no,
We'd rather be astride.

Farewell to Texaco-co-co
We're heading for the light,
With merry jest and Ho-ho-ho
On transports of delight.
The seeds of thrift we'll sew-sew-sew
In wood and meadow bright,
We won't waste petrol no-no-no,
We'd rather ride all night.

BOB SCOTT

Tony Miles

Chess

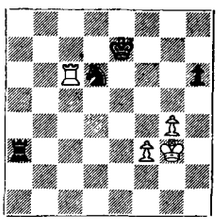
No 145 **Disaster at Buenos Aires**

The second Konex Canon tournament held in Buenos Aires produced much eventful chess. Without playing at all well I shot into an early lead with 5½/6 (and it could easily have been 6), but then disaster struck in a big way. In the 7th round I was playing the local youngster, Bernat, who at that stage had just one point. To his credit he defended well and reached a level endgame but, typically, was short of time. I moved quickly in an attempt to pressure him and, in doing so, walked into a freak mating net. The next day I had Black against the Argentinian GM Quinteros. He overslept (a round starting at 3.30 p.m.!) and arrived 57 minutes late. For those who are not familiar with international rules, a player arriving one hour late automatically forfeits the game, so I deliberately played to complicate the position, with embarrassing consequences. Thereafter I took little part in the struggle for first place.

The tournament then turned into a duel between Korchnoy and Ljubojevic who left the rest of the field way behind. The contrast in their styles was striking. Korchnoy looked tired and jaded and was struggling to score his points, generally grinding down even the tailenders in protracted endgames. Ljubojevic, on the other hand, was in fantastic form, his games were crisp, confident and often very short. With the interzonals approaching he must be one of the favourites to reach the Candidates. Even so, with 3 rounds to play the two were neck and neck, but with the Yugoslav having slightly weaker opponents remaining. It was at this point that I played my last part in the leadership battle. With White against Korchnoy I obtained a crushing position, but somehow could not find a clear killer, and, in time, disaster number three materialised. Somewhat cheesed off, I drew quietly with Ljubojevic in the final round to leave the two equal first at the impressive score of 10½/13. Third, at a distance, was Browne (USA) and I shared fourth.

White: Liberzon **Black: Ljubojevic**
1.P-K4, P-QB4; 2.N-KB3, P-Q3; 3.P-Q4, N-KB3; 4.N-B3, PxP; 5.NxP, P-QR3; 6.B-KN5, P-K3; 7.P-B4, P-N4; 8.P-K5, PxP; 9.PxP, Q-B2; 10.Q-K2, KN-Q2; 11.0-0-0, B-N2; 12.NxKP, PxN; 13.Q-R5ch, P-N3; 14.Q-N4, B-K2; 15.BxB, NxP; 16.Q-N3, KxB. Up to here all 'theory', or at least all analysed recently in a Russian magazine which considered mainly ...QxB, dismissing ...KxB because of 17.BxP"!" with no further explanation. Ljubojevic, naturally, had prepared more deeply. **17.BxP, R-QB1! 18.KR-B1.** Perhaps 18.B-R4 is a better try. **18...PxB; 19.Q-N5ch, K-K1; 20.Q-B6, N-B6!!** But not 20...N-B2; 21.Q-N7! Q-K2; 22.NxP, R-R3. Various combinations with N-Q6 were threatened. 23.N-B7ch! RxN; 24.R-Q8ch!! and the roof caves in. The text neatly blocks the KB file and the initiative passes to Black. **21.PxN, P-N5; 22.Q-R8ch, K-B2; 23.QxPch, K-B3; 24.Q-R4ch, K-N2; 25.QxP, RxP; 26.K-N1, R-R3; 27.R-B2, N-B3; 28.Q-Q6, Q-R4; 29.Q-Q7ch, K-R1; 30.K-B1, R-Q1.** Resigns, since 31.Q moves, Q-R8ch; 32.N-N1, QxNch! 33.KxQ, RxRmate.

Problem 145



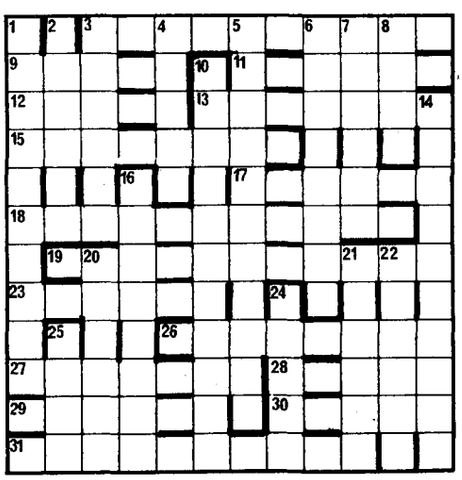
White to play is a knight down, but Black has only one pawn left. Should White continue quietly with 1.K-B4, aggressively with 1.P-N5 or something else? Analysis of both moves please. Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than 5 Sept.

Solution to Problem 143

1...Q-QN4! 2.R-R7, (2.Q-N7, Q-B8ch; 3.K-R2, RxP) Q-B8ch; 3.K-R2, P-N6ch; 4.PxP, R-B8; 5.P-QN4, Q-B5ch and wins.

Salamanca 21: 'Normal'

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Salamanca 21, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 4 September.



Chambers 1977 Edition is recommended, but solvers will find 27 in OED.

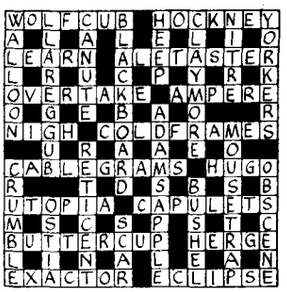
ACROSS

3 Peel's shout, given sight of brace of ducks around clear space once (10).
9 These stop, we hear? Not in *this* country they don't! (5).
11 Where black-ey'd Susan stood as a symbol of love, a poet's held (6).
12 Woe is me, not long defective (5).
13 Better Red? Better dead, it's feared (7).
15 If you've to study what Satan came to do, you'll find what's behind it (8).
17 Infeftment since invested in so Mac has it (6).
18 Take contents of this – add water to pot – sitter wants to drink it once brewed! (11).
19 Noble orders girl's set back (11).
23 Have a spell withdrawn in philosophical principle, initially seated? They do (6).
26 Packing in the hold a load of tungsten content that's scattered about (8).
27 Rare old arras weaver working one time in feeble light (7).
28 The sound of the rack, perhaps, turning about central wheel (5).
29 Irregular felspar, not soft, shows streaky structure (6).
30 Musicians found in English concert-room? (5).
31 Cibberish gibberish according to Pope? (Works are so petty?) (10).

DOWN

1 I never could keep appointments – give me a break to attempt to second time (10).
2 A move's made to do so (6).
3 One of Henry VIII's wives – which one? Rising in Austria? (6).
4 Some compound substance's termed as this (5).
5 Keyboard instrument's horribly sharp note held – 'sblood! (11).
6 Guide, somewhat asteroidal? Not i.e. correct (8).
7 In song Highland one's gone, see, and died? (6).
8 'In the forehead of the morning sky' one of these 'new-spangled, flames' (Milton) (4).
10 Governs what ostentatious girls wear, if made up right, dates to get round? (11).
14 Submarine? No, something for Aussie soak to raise in haste at damp pad! (10).
16 No armchair philosopher holds his views – in part four of play it's wrong (8).
20 Love-feasts presenting chief with classic song – when one's departed (6).
21 A palm that's really, say, from East Tyrol (6).
22 Following Frost, how to make *perfect* neighbours? What's new-made on the whole? (6).
24 Initially one will catch her eye? (5).
25 Ideal glamour of omphalos (4).

Solution to No 1312



Prizewinners to No 1312

Miss D. Hughes (N. Walsham)
Michael Hoyle (Amsterdam)
Miss C. Winfield (London SE1)

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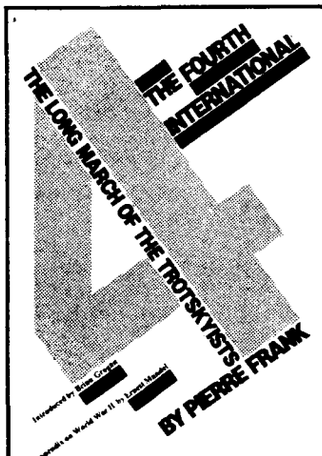

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